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MORAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL
STIMATES
OF THE
STATE AND FACULTIES
OF
MAN;
AND OF THE
NATURE AND SOURCES
OF
UMAN HAPPINESS.
SERIES OF DIDACTIC LECTURES.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N.

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БІЛОРУСЬКА МАЛАХІТНАЯ

ІЗОДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ

P R E F A C E.

AS these lectures were delivered occasionally, and not in the order they here follow on each other; so even now the whole circuit and association of them is not so closely compacted as it might have been, had such an arrangement been previously designed. Hence the author conceives it not unlikely that some readers may observe at least two defects in the work before them; one with regard to the completeness of the whole, and the other to the connection of the subjects.

He presumes, however, that these two deficiencies do not essentially affect the undertaking. If every thing whatever that relates to human happiness, or is reckoned as pertaining to it, be not specifically and expressly handled; yet no kind or class of these matters is absolutely overlooked. And the order or succession of them may the more easily be changed by every person, according to his mind, as they are all distinct and separate treatises. He does not so much pretend to have a complete system of the doctrine of happiness, as to have discussed the most important articles belonging to it; and he did his utmost to treat his subjects in such a manner as was best adapted to a thinking, and, for the most part, an enlightened audience. This last circumstance will plead in
his

his behalf, whenever some passages may appear more philosophical and abstracted than usual. He had the happiness to address himself to hearers, who, in general, were fully competent to such disquisitions, and could turn them to account. The more rare this happiness is, the less excusable would he have been, had he discoursed to them as to children, and not always endeavoured to lead them to farther advances in knowledge. And there can certainly be no harm in it, if the doctrines of religion and morality are delivered in various ways; and, at times, even so as that men, more addicted to reflection, may be taken and satisfied with them. Experience, however, has taught him, that even people of more slender knowledge, and of in-

ferior cultivation, learn more from such discourses, so soon as they cease to be strange to them, than from others, composed in a Hebrew-English dialect, and nicely fitted to the scholastic system, on which, most commonly, they never bestow one thought. Indeed discourses in general need not always operate immediately on the spot, as in the case of charitable collections, but should be calculated to produce permanent effects on persons not totally ignorant, and incapable of making reflections of their own. Let a man preach to these as he will, though they should not perhaps take in the whole scope of the discourse at one view, or even do not form to themselves clear conceptions of any of its parts that are of considerable length; yet, here or there, they will

comprehend some detached matter or other, some thought that strikes them, and will probably recollect it again as occasions offer; and, if only so much as this be effected, and that frequently, then must they be always considerable gainers by it.

Should several of the subjects here treated of appear to others not clerical, or not theological and biblical enough; in regard to the former, the author intreats them to consider, that every clergyman has his own circle of hearers, and that these hearers have their own personal exigencies; and, in respect to the latter, to weigh in their own minds whether any thing that relates so nearly to human perfection and happiness, can be either untheological or unbiblical. To the author

author at least, every truth is a religious and biblical truth, that has for its object the substantial improvement and the lasting happiness of mankind; though it should not, as it were, immediately relate to God and to the future world, and is no where expressly and scientifically treated of in the Bible, which presupposes many things, which but slightly touches upon others in few words, and leaves the farther developement and application of all to ourselves, or which even delivers the very same things in a different phraseology. The force of the scriptural doctrines by no means lies in the words wherein they were anciently promulgated to the Jews and the Heathens, but in the truth and the importance of the doctrines themselves. Thus, as the civilization, the language,

language, the manners and customs, the mode of thinking and of living, the circumference of human knowledge and of human exigencies, undergo alteration ; so also may and should, not indeed the essentials, but the compass, the application, and the way of delivering the doctrines of religion and wisdom be altered and adapted. In the article of the Christian pastoral office, which is the last in this collection, the author has more circumstantially explained himself upon this subject.

For the rest, the greater the importance of a right estimation of things, and the stronger the certainty of the fact, that it is the foundation of all real virtue and piety, and the surest way to happiness both in the present and

and the future life, so much the better grounded is the hope, that, under the blessing of God, this labour may not be without its use.

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E S T I M A T E . I.

W H E R E I N

T H E

D I G N I T Y o f M A N
C O N S I S T S.

Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

Psalms viii. 5.

VOL. I.

B

31

W H E R E I N

T H E D I G N I T Y O F M A N
C O N S I S T S.

MAN may be considered two different ways. In one we find him a very limited being; feeble and defective. Little superior, at best, to the beasts of the field, in many respects he seems below them: more circumscribed, more impotent, more unhappy than they. Considered in another light, he discovers the fairest dispositions, and the greatest capacities. Look at the effects of his external force; they indicate a being far more elevated than the inanimate or the animal creation. He performs actions

4 WHEREIN THE DIGNITY

which excite and deserve universal admiration; but the operations and productions of his mind, give demonstrations of his affinity with the Father of Spirits, and prove him to be, in the highest sense of the word, the son of God.

Considered on one side, human nature appears an object of compassion. And they who thus view it, take all possible pains to dismay us by derision, by representing our pretensions to dignity as the fancies of a foolish pride. On the other side, man seems to merit the greatest esteem and veneration. And such as regard him in this light, exalt him far above all surrounding creatures, make him capable of every excellence, and fitted for the highest grandeur.

Now, which way shall we contemplate man? Doubtless, we should study and understand him in both, if we would judge

rightly of the ends for which he was made; if we would neither be rash through pride, nor disheartened by conscious abasement.

It seems to me, however, as if human nature was not frequently enough considered on its fair and advantageous side; though it should oftener be so than on the other. Limitations, weaknesses, defects, and imperfections, never allow themselves to be forgotten; the sentiment of them is too painful, and too importunate, and their baneful influence on our felicity is too multiform and too apparent for us to deny. But talents that are not drawn forth, faculties that are not exerted, abilities that are not exhibited in action, or only operate in silence and obscurity, may easily be overlooked, may easily be neglected. And then there is a vast difference between these two sides, both in scope and duration. Infirmities, weaknesses, and imperfections, which may be often corrected, and which

6 WHEREIN THE DIGNITY

may, in part at least, be removed ; which belong not so essentially to human nature, deserve not therefore so much attention, as capacities, and faculties, and prerogatives, which not only at present carry importance with them, but go with us into eternity, and constantly effect greater perfection, and more exalted happiness. Certainly then the man that accustoms himself to consider human nature, rather on this side than the other, will judge more rightly, think far more nobly, act far better and more virtuously, than he who suffers the sentiment of his meanness and imperfections to be ever before him. Well then ; we will chuse the representation that promises us the most advantage and the greatest happiness.

We will consider the dignity of man : I have discoursed to you of it before. Oft have I encouraged you to the sentiment and the estimation of it. But, perhaps, this

com-

comprehensive term has not always excited the clearest representations in your mind. We will now more distinctly discriminate the principal matters wherein it consists.

By the dignity of man, we are, in general, to understand, whatever is eminently great and honourable in his nature, his situation, and his vocation; all that gives him a conscious value in the sight of God and of all rational beings. A dignity which is grounded on his intrinsically noble and generous sentiments, his privileges and his powers, and the peculiar manner wherein he displays the excellency of his intellect and his power of action. A dignity which forces from us some such exclamations to the Deity as those of the Psalmist: "Thou hast made him little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour!"

3 WHEREIN THE DIGNITY

Wherein, then, does the dignity of man consist ; or what gives him the dignity he has ? And how, and by what means does he exhibit his dignity ; or what occasions it in him, and what produces it forth ? — These are the principal questions we have now to answer.

Understanding, freedom, activity, an always progressive perfection, immortality, the regard wherein he stands towards God, and towards his son Jesus, the station he fills on the earth, and what he does in regard to all these : this composes the dignity of man ; this gives him his principal value.

Man is ennobled by understanding and reason. This is the first and chief ground of his dignity. This exalts him far above all the other creatures of the earth. By this he is in relationship with spiritual beings ; by this he takes his flight to the regions

gions above, and soars to the seat of GOD. He is neither altogether material nor altogether spirit ; not, like the beasts of the field, attached to the earth ; not incapable, like them, of resisting the impression of external things. He can lift up his eyes on high, and roam in spirit above terrestrial and visible objects : he can investigate himself ; distinguish himself from every thing around him, and seern his thoughts from that which thinks within him, can discriminate the present from the future in the conceptions of his mind : has an inward and clear consciousness of his existence, and his actions ; can inquire into the causes and motives of events, investigate their proportion and affinity to each other, examine their connections and consequences ; and, from what he knows and sees, can judge in a thousand cases of what he knows and sees not. And how comprehensive is his intellect ! How far does his reason venture, and how often does it succeed in its boldest researches !

Who

10 WHEREIN THE DIGNITY

Who can relate the numberless images, judgments, conclusions, remarks, and observations which arise in the human mind, which associate, concatenate, or interweave themselves during its short sojourn on this terrestrial globe, and supply it with matter for everlasting reflections? And what is there in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, in the sea, and in all deep places, in the visible or the invisible world, in the region of possibilities and action, in the obscurity of the past, and in the night of the future, what is there that the curiosity of the human spirit does not strive to possess, that its powers cannot frame, that it does not endeavour to know, to fathom and to explain, that it does not long to compare or to combine with what it already knows? Allow that it frequently mistakes, that it often takes appearances for truth, that it discovers and knows comparatively but little, that in more than one respect it is totally ignorant: yet, who can fail of perceiving the value of what it really does

does know and reach, by its faculties? who the still greater value of its incessant endeavours after what it knows not yet, and cannot reach? Who can deny the dignity it receives from hence?

Freedom, moral freedom, is another characteristic of man; another source of his dignity. While the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the host of heaven, mechanically execute their unknown laws, and roll about in the regions of space; while the animals blindly pursue their irresistible impulses, and are entirely dependent on impressions from without; man is not absolutely subjected to those laws, nor obliged by these instincts. He can controul, alter or decline these laws in a thousand different ways, in regard to his affections and actions: he can withstand, or totally surmount these instincts. He can consider, compare, select, conclude, execute his resolves, or relinquish and change

change them for others. He distinguishes truth from error, good from bad, and semblance from reality ; suffers not himself to be imposed on by a dazzling outside, a deceitful lustre, a desirable, or terrific appearance : he stops not at the present moment ; sees to the remotest consequences of things ; and is neither necessitated blindly to trust to the informations of his senses, nor implicitly to follow his feelings as they arise. He chuses and does that which he finds to be right and good, and best for the occasion ; he rejects and avoids that which he holds to be unjust and base, or productive of harm ; and directs himself in his choice and his conduct, by the sagacity of his intellect, and by the light of his reason. This sagacity indeed may often deceive him ; this light may sometimes lead him wrong. But then the way is not shut to his return. He can discover the deceit, be aware of his error, repent of his mistake, alter his conduct, and learn by these sad experiences,

experiences, to act more prudently and more cautiously for the future. He thus guides, directs, and governs himself according to the circumstances of external things. Thus is he neither a rotatory being in the system of the world, nor the slave of his own judgement, nor the sport of outward causes and events. Thus he does nothing but what he wills, and nothing can compel him to will any thing but what he at that time holds for the best. And what a high privilege does this give him over all the inanimate as well as the merely sensitive but irrational creation ! What importance, what dignity must all his conclusions and actions acquire from hence, that they are peculiarly his own resolutions, his own actions, the principles, aims, consistency, and connection whereof he knows, and can give an account of to himself and to others ! How much more valuable must one single good action of a man be, than the whole benign influence of

of the sun, unconscious of itself and of all its effects diffused throughout the system.

Activity, the most diversified, the most indefatigable activity, is a third characteristic of man, a third source of his dignity. Indeed every thing in nature is incessantly moving; the inanimate as well as the living, the animal no less than the rational world. Every thing has force, and all force effects what it can and must produce. Perfect inactivity, immoveable sloth, compleat death, seem to be excluded from the creation of God. But where shall we find greater and more diversified activity than in man? And where activity, with consciousness, with reflection, and design, but in him? When does the human spirit cease from thinking? And how rapidly, how innumerably do its thoughts succeed each other! When does it cease from producing revolutions within and without?

How

How much good, how much mischief, how much general advantage, how much general harm is often occasioned by a thought, a word, a look, a gesture, an emotion of man ! And how far, how immeasurably wide is the influence of what he does extended through time and space ! — How various, how connected, how intricate, how comprehensive, how extensive are often his occupations and enterprizes ! What does he not produce, effect and controul within the sphere of his action ? What is there that exists, what happens, wherein he does not concern himself by a thousand means, which does not exercise his bodily, or his mental powers ? — And what obstacle, what difficulties can effectually keep him from them, or totally quench the ardour of his activity ? What is more hateful to him than inaction and death ; what more desirable in his eyes than diversified life and disseminated production ? Is not this the scale by which he

he measures the value of himself and others, and all external things?—And a creature of so incessant, so unwearied an activity, with an inward sentiment of himself and the faculties which produce that activity, must be eminently superior to beings of smaller activity, or beings unconscious of their existence. Does not he acquire very considerable dignity from this alone?

But, fourthly, a capacity continually advancing; and constantly acquiring new degrees of perfection, discovers to us a fresh ground of his pre-eminence and dignity. The sun is glorious to behold; fair is the moon, fair are the stars; beautiful the vegetables and plants that adorn the surface of our earth; each of them is good and perfect in its kind: but they remain as they are; their figure, their beauty, their motion, their operation is invariably the same. They are absolutely that which they are and must be.

No

Not so is man. He is not absolutely what he may and can be. He is confined by no space; no time can set bounds to his action. One degree of perfection leads him on to another: he stands not so high, but he may strive to be higher. His capacities develop, his powers increase in proportion to his application and exertion of them: and the circle of his views and operations enlarges according to the degree by which his capacities unfold, and his powers improve. When has he learnt so much, that he sees nothing farther to learn? When does he know and understand all that he may understand and know? When has he proceeded so far in wisdom and virtue, that he can make no farther progress in them? When has he performed so much, and acted so beneficently about him, that he is capable of doing no more, and has no more beneficence to perform? And when do his aims and endeavours cease? Who, in all these regards, can set bounds to the

of the deity; his activity something similar to that of God; his capacity of becoming constantly more perfect, is a capacity of approaching nearer to the divine nature; his immortality is a similitude of the interminable duration of the Sovereign Being, and the means of an everlasting fellowship with him. As often as he thinks of truth; as often as he is inclined to goodness, and brings it to effect; as often as he perceives, admires, and promotes order and harmony; as often as he spreads love, and joy, and happiness around him: so often does he think, and will, and perform, and feel, and act in a godlike manner; so often does he pursue the work of his creator, and father; so often does he promote the designs of the Sovereign Being; so often does he obtain a taste of pure divine felicity; and the more he does so, the oftener he acts in this manner, the greater is his similitude with God, the brighter does the image of God shine in him, the less are we able to mistake

mistake his high descent, and to overlook the dignity of his nature. It is then that God visibly acts, as it were in him and through him ; by him he gives testimony of the truth ; he instructs and reveals himself to mankind by him ; by him he maintains the cause of virtue ; by him he speaks comfort to the afflicted ; by him he pours balm into the wounded heart ; by him affords help and support to the wretched, distributes bread to the hungry, and gives strength to the weak ; his world is improved by him ; and through him he spreads life and joy more diffusively around. And to be such an instrument in the hand of God ; to have such a similitude with him, the most perfect, the most glorious Being ; to approach so near to the divinity, and, in a manner, to stand in his place upon the earth ; must not this confer a great, or rather the greatest dignity on man ?

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This circumstance it is that brings him so near to the only begotten of the Father, to his son Jesus ; this it is that connects him so closely, so intimately with him in whom the Father is well pleased, whom he has constituted Lord of all, and is the highest pattern of all human perfection. And what a dignity does man acquire from his relationship to Jesus, whom he reveres as his restorer and chief ! To have him, the most complete image of the Father, the beam of divine effulgence, for his relation, his brother, his friend, his captain and leader, his Lord ; to be as strictly, as indissolubly united with him, as the members of the body are united to the head ; to be so beloved of him as no friend ever loved another, or can love him, to be so unanimous with him, and to carry on the same designs, to work with him as he does with the Father ; in more than one respect to represent him on the earth among mankind, and to forward the purposes he began ;

gan ; how much must this exalt the dignity of man ! What honour, what splendor, what eminence must it give him ! What may not creatures, whom God has so highly favoured, expect at his hands ! What degree of perfection and bliss may not be attainable by them !

Lastly, consider man in his outward figure, and his station in the world. Consider the place he fills upon the earth ; what he is and does with all its other inhabitants ; and in this regard also you cannot mistake his dignity. See how man stands, full of consciousness, amidst all inferior creatures ; how exalted and eminent he is above them ; how all proclaim him the sovereign of the globe and its inhabitants, the substitute of its author, and the priest of nature ! With what a comprehensive view does he survey, distribute, order, connect, and apprehend ; now darting his eye from earth to heaven, and then look-

ing down from heaven upon the earth with sentiments of delight; affectionately cherishing every thing that lives and moves; his sentimental heart expands to the innumerable streams of pleasure and joy, which from all sides flow to meet him, till he is lost in the sweetest sentiments of love and adoration! —

How beautiful, how elevated his mien! How significant and expressive every feature of his face, every position, every movement of his person! How forcible is the language of his eye! How he displays his whole soul by a glance of it, and with an irresistible energy at one time commands reverence, at another submission and obedience, and at another love; now inspiring courage and resolution, then pleasure and satisfaction in all about him! How often does he confound wickedness by a look, defeat the schemes of injustice, drive sorrow from the breast of the mourner, and

dart

dart life and heavenly joy where darkness and distress prevailed. Who can here mistake the elevation and the dignity of man! —

And who can deny, that all things on the earth relate to man, that all are animated, beautified, and connected as the means of human happiness, and for the glory of God? How extensively do the influences and operations of man, either mediately or immediately prevail! What does he not extort from the very elements and the abscondite powers of nature! And what revolutions and productions does he not bring forth! What desert does not become a paradise by his presence and industry; and what paradise not more paradisaical when he builds his habitation in it! Represent to yourself the earth without mankind, without rational creatures on it, and what do you discover it to contain? Certainly still many great beauties; but more

more savage than gentle, more dreadful than delightful beauties; still indeed much life, but life without consciousness, without reflection, without appropriate enjoyment, without recollection of the great Author of it. No; nature is beautiful, enchantingly beautiful; but man adorns it, collects all the scattered and single beauties about him, and sees and feels, and enjoys them, and delights in them. Nature is fruitful, inexhaustibly fruitful; but man improves her fertility, guides it, and gives it its most generally useful direction. Nature is full of life; but man diversifies, elevates, and ennobles this life, and is happy in the enjoyment of it. Thus is he the lord of this part of the creation; the priest of nature, from whose heart, from whose lips the thanksgiving and praise of all inanimate and all living creatures, ascend to heaven; the central point in which all that surround him unite, and all attain their completion and perfection.—Would you

you estimate his powerful and benign influence on all things; then, only compare the regions inhabited by man with those wherein he has not fixed his abode; compare the European and Asiatic luxuriance of gardens and fields, with the wilds of America. Here nature languishes for want of cultivation: there plenty and joy meet the traveller with smiles. Here impenetrable forests, and vast impassable marshes cover the earth; its undirected and useless fertility, stifles and destroys itself; and pestilential vapours obscure its surface: there the sun, unimpeded, diffuses its light and heat; the waters flow in pleasant streams; the noisome vapours are dispersed; the winds are admitted to refresh and purify the atmosphere; and the weeds are eradicated from among the useful plants. Where man is not, and does not act, there are trackless wastes; there frost, and cheerless silence, and dreadful death prevail: where man appears, where he lives and acts,

acts, there he makes him paths; there he decks the earth with flowers and fruits, there the air brings health and strength, and pleasant odours with it, there he animates and gladdens all, there you hear the lowing herds and the expressive joyfulness of man. And how much more beautiful, more glorious is nature now; how rich and beneficent under the guiding hand, and the genial attentions and culture of man! All is now the mirror of the deity, the school of wisdom, the source of pleasure, the means of exercise and perfection, the foretaste of purer joys and higher happiness! How connected now is the visible with the invisible, the present with the future, the terrestrial world with the world of spirits, and the creature with the creator!

And man, who effects and produces all this; man, who possesses such an understanding, such a freedom, such activity,

such capacities for ever tending to perfection; a being immortal; a being in the similitude of God, so intimately connected with his son Jesus Christ; and sustaining such a part upon the globe, and filling such a character in regard to the other creatures; must not man possess great dignity in the sight of God, a pre-eminent dignity in his sight, and in that of all rational existences?

Judge then more justly of mankind, judge more justly of thyself, O thou, who probably only beholdest thyself on the side of weakness and imperfection, and considerest not the superiority and the excellency of thy nature! Treat mankind, and treat thyself conformably with truth. Debaue not the human race, under pretence of exalting their sovereign and father, God; and when thou speakest of his corruption and misery, forget not however that he is the work of the Almighty's hand, that the ignominy of the creature can ne-

ver redound to the glory of the creator; forget not, that dimness of sight is not total blindness, that shades give relief to light, that great misuse of power implies great power, that the first act of life is not the whole of life, that the tottering, feeble infant will arrive at manhood, and then will accomplish much; and that the God, who, on the revision of all, that he had made, pronounced it good, and beheld it with delight; will certainly conduct all things to their proper ends, to the summit of perfection.

No; confess and feel thy dignity, O man! thy faculties, thy privileges; and feel and confess them with a cheerful and a grateful heart! It is not imagination, it is not pride; it is sentiment founded on truth. Pride will ruin this sentiment of thy dignity, so long as it prevents thee from seeing, that in every instant thou art to use these faculties, capacities,

cities, and prerogatives, to thy own elevation, in all thou art, and dost. No; feel, and acknowledge the whole value of thy reasonable nature, the whole worth of thy superlative powers! Else, canst thou not use them worthily; else canst thou not do and enjoy, that which thou mayest do and enjoy by thy nature, and thy appointment; thou canst not render thy creator the gratitude, nor perform the service to thy fellow-creatures, which thou oweſt to him and to them. No; thou must reverence thyſelf, and all men must be honourable to thee. Each is an important, a necessary link in the chain of things; each an essential, indispensable being, on which all things operate, and which operates again on all; whose influence, however narrow the ſphere of it may ſeem, is immensely large; and its activity continuing for ever.

But let not the knowledge of thy dignity be a bare representation of thy mind.

Let

Let it animate all thy reflections, enlarge and warm thy heart, and display itself in all thy actions. Think justly and greatly; act freely and generously, be constantly more and more active in justice and beneficence; strive unremittently after higher perfection; live like a creature that is not wholly to die, that is to live for ever; endeavour to acquire daily a nearer resemblance with God, and to approach nearer to the model of his son Jesus Christ; fulfill the functions appointed thee on earth; there act and rule with wisdom and loving kindness, and continually disseminate more life and joy and happiness around thee. So wilt thou do honour to mankind, and to God their creator and father, and incontrovertibly evince, that God has crowned thee with glory and honour, and has only made thee lower than the spirits of bliss for this period of time.

E S T I M A T E II.

W H A T I S I N O P P O S I T I O N T O T H E D I G N I T Y O F M A N.

**Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
and hast crowned him with glory and honour.**

Psalm viii. 6.

THE TOWER

BY THE AUTHOR
OF THE TOWER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

NEW YORK:

BY THE AUTHOR.
1840.

W H A T I S I N
O P P O S I T I O N

T O T H E

D I G N I T Y o f M A N.

THE greater man's dignity is, so much the more highly is he engaged to preserve it uncontaminated, and to think and act in conformity to it. The greater his dignity, the more does every thing that is in opposition to it, that lessens or obscures its splendour, debase and degrade him. Better, far better would it be to fill the lowest place, than to be exalted above others, and to disgrace himself by low sentiments and shameful ac-

tions : better, far better, to live in obscurity, and be lost in the crowd, than to be conspicuous beyond others, and to walk in the light, but by error, folly, and vice, to betray a greater love for darkness : better, far better, to have meaner faculties and far less elevated powers, than great powers and exalted faculties, to misapply them, or not use them at all : better, far better, to possess no prerogatives, than to degrade them by unworthy behaviour, or by negligence to render them of no effect. And may not this be the case with numbers of mankind, and possibly with some among us ? We all enjoy great privileges, as men, great abilities and powers : we all display a superiority in various ways, over the other inhabitants of the earth ! we all fill a more elevated rank in the scale of existencies, live and act in a higher and a larger sphere than they : we are all endowed with a certain nobility, a certain peculiar dignity which exalts us far

far above every thing about us. No one that has impartially considered the nature and the destination of man, and knows and feels himself, is able to contradict this fact. Reflect upon our last investigation of this subject. Which of us then did not perceive the dignity of man, did not admire it, did not rejoice in it? But how seldom is it displayed in its perfect purity, in all its lustre! How oft is it veiled, like the sun, with thick and gloomy clouds, or obscured by the impenetrable opacity of matter! How often does man forget, belie, and debase his dignity! How often does he think and act in such a manner as if he were not that reasonable, that free, that active, that emulative, that immortal, that godlike creature; as if he were not the wise and beneficent ruler of the earth, the pious priest of nature; but exactly the contrary to all this! and how low must it sink him in the eyes of all intelligent creatures, how low in his own, when he compares

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what he is and does with what he might be, and is able to do ! would he but frequently make these comparisons, and not decline the salutary shame and confusion it must necessarily produce ! My present design is to facilitate this method to such of you as are fallen from your dignity, or have much lessened or obscured it by your sentiments and your conduct.

To this end, I shall shew you what is derogatory to the dignity of man.

Let every one compare his own sentiments and his own actions therewith ; judge them both with strict impartiality ; let him not quickly turn his eyes away from those things which degrade and debase him, and which he must immediately feel to degrade and debase him, and by that means let him rouze himself as soon & possible to become what he is not yet, and

and immediately to set about doing what he has hitherto left undone !

A man acts inconsistently with the lofty understanding and reason of his nature ; he acts against his own dignity, debases and degrades himself whenever he does not cultivate his understanding and his reason, when he does not use them to those purposes for which the Creator bestowed them on him ; when truth and error, appearance and reality, are things indifferent to him, when he is contented with smaller or more trifling knowledge and pursuits, than such as he might acquire and pursue by his abilities, his faculties, his situation, by the peculiar means and opportunities he has or may have to that end. Where is then your dignity, O human creatures ! How does your nobility appear, if you avoid that silence and retirement which is so favourable, and generally so indispensably necessary to continued reflec-

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tion ; you who benumb your spirit by an unceasing round of dissipation, distraction, and tumultuous pleasure ; who seldom attain to any clear and intimate consciousness of yourselves and your condition ; who seldom exercise yourselves in consideration or reflection, turn your thoughts constantly more without than within ; exist more by the opinions and judgements of others, than live in that self-sentiment which is the necessary concomitant of habitual meditation ? Where is your dignity, how does your nobility appear, you who rest merely in what you see, and hear, and feel, who so seldom inquire into the causes and grounds, and views of things ; and, like the beasts of the field, are occupied in enjoying the present moments, forgetful of the past, and losing sight of the future ? Where is your dignity, how does your nobility appear ? you, who find it so difficult to raise yourselves above visible and earthly things, who so soon feel weary and disgusted

disgusted of any serious reflection on God and religion, on duty and virtue, on death and immortality, on the vocation and the important concerns of man ; to whom rational piety, that noblest elevation of the human mind, is so little agreeable and pleasant, and are more delighted with what affects and flatters the senses, than with any communications with the world of spirits, and with God, the Father of all spirits ? Where is your dignity ? how does your natural nobility appear ? you, who, with the best means and opportunities of investigation and advancement in knowledge, only think and talk in the sentiments of others ; you who allow yourselves to be governed merely by the prejudices of education, of appearance, of fashion, who blindly embrace and revere every prevailing opinion ; who are constantly whirled round in the same narrow circle of false, obscure, and extremely defective conceptions and notions ; who stifle your natural curiosity ;

curiosity; who neither acquire nor seek any better information; who remain ignorant in regard of so many important matters, and probably applaud yourselves for your ignorance; and, therefore, in general take so little pains to cultivate your understanding, and to enlarge and rectify your knowledge? Is not this egregiously to belie your noblest privileges, to pervert or disuse them?

Would you maintain your dignity, you must use the understanding and reason which God hath granted you, and whereby he hath so far exalted you above all the other inhabitants of the earth; cultivate it with care, let the adorning, the invigorating, and the elevating of your mind be at least as much your earnest endeavour, as the nourishment and the embellishment of your person; exercise your reflection on all that you see and do; constantly preserve the clear consciousness of yourself, and

and avoid every thing which benumbs and oppresses that sentiment; rest not in the semblances of things, in their outward appearance, their first impressions; strive to find out their true qualities, dive into their motives, into their aims, and their intentions, consider them in their connections and consequences; direct frequently your eyes and your heart on high, raise them to the first, the eternal cause of all things, keep up your close correspondence with the Father of spirits, and thereby perform what no other creature on this terrestrial globe can do; let not the sensibility of your spirit be kept down upon the earth; let not sloth hinder you from investigating the truth; and be faithful in the use of all the means which providence hath afforded you, to the extenſion of your views, and the increase of your knowledge.

Farther, every thing that opposes the freedom of man, whatever contracts and prevents

prevents its use; militates against the dignity of man; dishonours and debases him, and renders him unworthy of the station he fills among the creatures of God. Be ye free indeed; maintain by your freedom the dignity of man, ye who cannot withstand any impression, any charm, any strong attack of outward things, who do only what is agreeable in your eyes and pleasant to your heart; ye who never refuse or resist, or cannot refuse and resist, without conflict and violence, what gratifies your palate, flatters your senses, or satisfies your animal cupidity.—Be ye free, maintain, by your freedom, the dignity of man, ye who scarcely ever behold with your own eyes, act from your own lights, who have scarce any settled principles, and follow no fixed rule in your conduct; you who are blindly swayed by the prevalency of custom, the tyranny of fashion, and the force of example; are constantly inquiring after, and constantly directing yourselves by, what is held

held to be true, and beautiful, and right, and good, more than by what is really and intrinsically true, and beautiful, and right, and good.—Be ye free, maintain, by your freedom, the dignity of man, ye who suffer yourselves to be dazzled by the lustre of gold, the splendour of station, the richness of dress, to be captivated by every fair appearance, to be deluded by every imposture, to be deceived by every pretence, to start at every fancied terror, to follow every lure; who can surmount no considerable hindrance in your way, nor withstand any uncommon temptation to vice.—Be ye free, maintain, by your freedom, the dignity of man, ye whose love and hatred, whose hope and fear, whose joy and sorrow, whose good or ill humour, whose opinions and conclusions, whose whole behaviour in general depends on mere outward things; almost on every accident, on every company, on every slight alteration in the body or in the weather, so

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as one while to make you think thus; and at another otherwise; who are seldom in agreement with yourselves, so seldom do that which you had resolved to do, and to leave off that which you had determined to forsake.—Be free, maintain, by your freedom, the dignity of man, ye who are in bondage to vice; who suffer yourselves to be so tyrannized by some base inordinate passion, that ye follow its impulses with implicit obedience, comply with its orders to do such things as your hearts rise up to condemn, which your reason and conscience tell you are unrighteous and wrong.—Be free, maintain, by your freedom, the dignity of man, ye who forget the rights of mankind, and their natural equality; who obsequiously bow down before greatness and power, who blindly submit to their judgments, their actions, and their orders; who tremble at every frown, at every threat, of the mighty; who purchase their favour by cringing flattery, by criminal complacency,

cency, and are entirely dependent on the looks and dispositions of feeble mortals.

No; your freedom, that noble, that inestimable privilege of man, is by this, at least, much weakened, if not totally obscured; is more natural temper and compliance, than operative, active energy. Ye are slaves, slaves to the senses, slaves to accident, slaves to men, slaves to your cupidity; and, so long as you are so, you reduce yourselves to the level of the beasts of the field, so long is the dignity of man scarcely to be distinguished in you; only now and then a feeble ray appears through the thick veil which covers it. Would you have it shine forth again in all its splendour? O, then, break the chains of your bondage by which sensuality binds you down; make use of the reflection which God has given you; learn to act with thought and consideration; trust not to the first impressions of things, to the first suggestions

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gestions that arise within you; in all your determinations consult experience, reason, and the will of God; hearken to the voice of your conscience; and act not against your own conviction, nor do contrarily to what you must acknowledge to be good and proper. Endeavour to acquire a certain firmness and consistency in your thoughts, your inclinations, and actions, which is the foundation of all true freedom, the completest security against all servitude and bondage, an infallible characteristic of human dignity.

If that natural activity, which is constantly more or less operative in man, and can never be entirely destroyed, be another characteristic of his dignity, then, thirdly, every thing must be contrary to it which enervates, suppresses, reduces, or perverts it, and gives it a wrong direction. And what numberless faults are men guilty of in this respect, by which they debase themselves;

selves, and degrade their nature ! On one hand, are men who avoid all attentive and serious consideration, all exertion of their bodily or mental powers, all that requires any trouble, any pains, or any deep investigation ; who shudder alike at any labour, or any intricate business, or any considerate undertaking ; always imagining their faculties to be more feeble than they are, almost entirely neglect to use them for fear they should be exhausted ; are afraid of the remotest danger to their lives or their health, to give up the slightest conveniences, to sacrifice any trifle to duty, to the opportunity of doing good, and to be useful to the community ; who are ever languishing after rest, and seek their felicity in wealth, or in other external things, and pleasing themselves in imagining they possess them, without employing them to useful purposes, or once considering that it is more blessed to give than to receive ; men, who complain, and probably make

it a reproach to Providence, that man is ordained to eat bread in the sweat of his brow; that all he has is to be acquired, purchased, earned, and laboured for by painful industry; that he has so many obstacles to surmount, so many difficulties to encounter, so many foes to contend with, in his way to peace and happiness, that he must often watch, and think, and consider, and care for others.—On the other hand are men who employ the greatest activity and powers, wherewith they might do so much good to themselves and to others, direct it to mere trifles, and dissipate it all upon them; ever busy, ever full of turmoil, and yet bring nothing to effect that is worthy of them, nothing that is useful to society, nothing that can clear them in the hour of death, or be rewarded in the day of judgement; men, who, as if they were always children, trifle, and loiter, and sport, and throw away their whole lives, employed barely in what relates to the ornamenting

hamenting their persons, in making a parade of their exterior attractions, and shining as a figure in the fashionable circles of society, and thereby neglect their most important concerns.—Others there are, who are very active, but active in wickedness; who bring much to pass, but seldom any good; who sow pestilential seed on all sides, lay stumbling-blocks in the way of the simple, spread snares for unsuspecting integrity, destroy domestic and social harmony, fan and feed the fire of discord, meddle with all things and perplex them all; who, from a misplaced activity, would do every thing themselves, and thereby prevent others from doing it better.

Ye who think and act in this manner, who so suppress your propensity to action, or give it so wrong a direction, awake from your slumbers, be ashamed of your sloth, if you would maintain the dignity of your nature. At present your life is no more

than a dream ; you can have no rational joys ; you possess your eminent powers in vain, or you pervert them by misapplication. To live like a man, means, to use our activity, to be conscious of our actions, and to do as much good as we can. To rest like men, does not mean to be idle, does not imply inaction, but to turn from hard to lighter employments, and to rejoice in the success of our endeavours. Would you not vegetate like plants, nor exist like the inferior animals, but live like rational creatures, and enjoy that honourable repose which is worthy of man ; then be active, and augment your industry, but be active and industrious in virtue ; then lead a busy life, but be busy in beneficence ; then use and improve your faculties till they be indefatigable, and decline not the greatest exertions when duty and philanthropy demand them of you.

If capacity, ever increasing, ever tending to perfection, be a fourth characteristic of man, then must every thing be in opposition to his dignity, which hinders the display of that capacity, which checks him in his endeavours after higher perfection, that puts him back, or fatigues and dispirits him in it. And with what numbers of people does this capacity remain nothing but capacity? How few unfold and bring the powers into action as much as they might and ought! Or, is that to stretch forwards, is that ever to improve and perfectionate our faculties, is that properly to use them, when we are so easily satisfied with what we know, what we are, and what we do; when we indeed prefer the good to bad, but so seldom the better to the good? when we reckon ourselves sufficiently wise so soon as we understand the business of our station or calling, and have learnt to act our part with tolerable decency in social life; when we imagine

ourselves virtuous and pious enough so long as we keep from open transgressions, from flagrant and shameful vice? when we do not laugh at religion, while we frequent the public worship, and maintain the character of an honest and harmless man; while we confine our beneficence merely to almsgiving, to general courtesy and politeness; but are lothe to sacrifice any thing, or deny ourselves in the slightest instance for others, from a generous and a benevolent spirit? Is that to be called stretching forward, always striving after perfection, duly to use our faculties, and thereby maintain the glorious privileges of man, when we are afraid of being wiser and better than others, of shewing our superiority by a sounder judgement, nobler sentiments, and a purer virtue? when we will not undertake to leave the common, the beaten path, will not rise above prevailing prejudices and customs, from a dread of being charged with affectation and

and singularity, and are contented to regulate and frame ourselves by others, and commonly by people of moderate talents and feeble hearts? Is that to be termed stretching forwards, is that to be called always striving after perfection, and properly to put our powers in action, when we suffer every obstacle we meet with in our way to perfection, every thwarting temptation, every trip, every desire of outward things, every sneer of the fool, every jest of the self-conceited, to scare us from the pursuit of our aim, or make us abandon our good resolves?

No; would you likewise in this respect maintain the dignity of your nature; first, you must allow neither your sloth nor the example of others to sway you with an arbitrary controul. Think not that you are wise and virtuous, and pious to a degree of sufficiency, that you have already done good enough, and have rendered ample

service to the world ; regard no height of knowledge, of wisdom, of virtue and piety as properly unattainable ; and reckon what you already know, already possess, already can do, and already have done, as the least part in comparison of what you still may hope to know, to attempt, and to perform. To be all and to do all that man is capable of doing and becoming, and to perform whatever depends on human strength, let that be the exalted, the glorious aim of your stedfast endeavours ! an object you are constantly to strive to attain, but which you will never completely reach.

Then, first, you are immortal. And this gives you a dignity which eminently raises you above the whole inanimate and transitory creation. Oh, beware of every thing that is at variance with this your excellency, or can obscure the lustre of it ! O man, thou art immortal, thou shalt continue,

tinue, thou shalt live, thou shalt be happy, for ever! and dost thou still confine thy views to the present; dost thou attend only to the moments of this short life, dost thou let thy whole heart depend on what is transient and earthly, and seek thy whole felicity in things which death will take thee from, which are allowed thee to use only for some few days or hours? Thou art immortal; thou shalt remain, live, and be happy, for ever; and dost thou still live so, as if thou wert altogether flesh, altogether to see corruption; as if thou hadst nothing to expect beyond the grave, and nothing then to fear; as if no judgement and no sentence, no reward or punishment, awaited thy spirit; as if thy present conduct stood in no connection with thy future lot! Thou art immortal; thou shalt subsist, live, and be happy for ever! And still hast thou so little regard for the future! And still dost thou so seldom sacrifice the deceitful pleasures of this present

sent moment to the everlasting joys of heaven ! And still dost thou so frequently complain of that which prepares and conducts thee to so exalted a state ! Still does every misfortune strike thee down ! and still does every terrestrial desire as deeply affect thee as if thou hadst no other and no greater satisfactions to expect ! And still dost thou tremble at the approach of death, which is to put thee in possession of such great felicity ! And still dost thou shudder and start back at the sight of the opening grave, as if thou and all thy comforts were there to be absorbed and annihilated for ever ! What inconsistency ! What self-degradation ! Dost thou thus consider, and thus treat the dignity of an immortal Being, as if it were nothing superior to the dust of the earth ? Are these the judgements, the sentiments, the inclinations, the concerns, the joys, the cares, the solicitudes, befitting a man who has

such

such a prospect before him, who has an everlasting life in view?

No; wouldst thou support thy dignity, O man! then never forget that thou art ordained to eternal life. This consideration must often strike thee, both in the tumult of society, and in the silence of solitude; in the midst of thy pleasures, and in the midst of thy business, must call out to thee with a piercing voice: let not thy heart be attached to things which thou must certainly lose, which thou probably must leave so soon! Treat not with indifference things that infallibly influence forever thy future lot! Confine not thy desires, thy endeavours, thy hopes, to the present moment, when thou seest an eternity before thee! Neglect not for the affairs and distractions of this short and uncertain life, the far more weighty concerns of thy soul, which shall live for ever! Let the prospect of the future be the rule of

of thy business; and thy behaviour for the present. Bear and forbear, as one whom no sorrows and sufferings upon earth can sink or abase, whom nothing can terrify or allure from his high destination. Give and forgive, and sacrifice, as one whose riches are inexhaustible, and whose happiness can never be destroyed! Enjoy thy satisfactions, thy delights, as one who expects purer satisfactions and far nobler delights! Constantly chuse, and constantly do that which will never cause thee remorse, that which thou wilt forever enjoy! So will the nobility, the dignity, the majesty, of an immortal being be resplendent in thee in all thy thoughts, and in all thy deeds, in what thou suffereſt, and in what thou dost enjoy, and give a value to thy life which nothing besides can give.

Wouldſt thou maintain thy dignity, O man! then, fixtly, beware of whatever is in opposition to the close and bleſſed regard

gard in which thou standest towards God and Jesus, of all that may weaken, obscure, or destroy thy fellowship with Christ. — Reverence thy spirit, by which thou art not only related to angels, but art the offspring of God ; and beware of misusing its faculties, for that is to misuse what is most glorious in thee, what brings thee into affinity with God. Beware of every error, and of every sin ; for error and sin remove thee from God, and make thee less fit for fellowship with him. Beware of every thing that is contrary to the mind of Jesus, that pattern of human dignity, that perfect image of the Father. Beware of hindering the beneficent views of God towards man, and the great work of his delegate on earth, in promoting infidelity or superstition by corrupt example, or unrighteous actions, and by rendering his doctrines vain as far as in thee lies. Rather seek thy whole comfort in them, to will as God wills, to be so minded as Jesus was,

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was, to act as thou seest thy Almighty Father act; and so to walk as Jesus also walked. So will the spirit of God, the spirit of his son Jesus, be visible in thee, and act in thy actions. So wilt thou be in the hand of God towards thy brethren, what that extraordinary teacher formerly was; what those heavenly messengers were; and what the apostles of our Lord have been. So wilt thou have the honour to be called, in the highest sense of the word, a son; a daughter of God; the honour of being a brother, a sister, of Jesus, the first born of the Father, ever improving in capacity and worth. And what a glory will this confer upon all thou art, and upon all thou dost!

Lastly, O man! there is dignity and grandeur in thy outward form; beware then lest any degrading sentiments, any unseemly grief and sorrow, any violent inordinate passions should tarnish or impair

pair it. Let the nobility of thy spirit animate and exalt the beauty of thy person. Let thine eyes speak neither falsehood nor artifice; neither envy nor hatred; thy lips neither treachery nor lies; but both they and these, simple truth, and simple love. Let thy look be friendly to mankind; let thy countenance be open; and all thy mien and gesture express thy cultivated understanding, thy kind and generous heart!

And thou, the principal, the chief inhabitant of the earth! rule and govern, O man! in the name of thy Great Superior; and if thou wouldest maintain the dignity of God's vicegerent in this province of his dominion, then rule and govern with tenderness and wisdom. Be not the tyrant, be the guardian, the protector, the leader of all inferior creatures; drive them not from thee, but draw them to thee

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thee [with] complacency, with compassion, with succour. Slay and destroy them not without necessity; and when thou hast need of them, when thou canst not even spare their lives, at least forbear to multiply their sufferings, and to augment their pain; torment them not, to prolong thy savage pleasure, or to gratify thy fastidious appetite. Do not desolate and ravage the earth, which thou art to improve and to adorn. Spread not death and destruction, but life and joy around thee. Be principally the benefactor of thy brethren, of whatever nation, of whatever condition they may be. Despise none; injure none; let none feel thy power, or thy pre-eminence, but as the tokens of thy beneficence and love; lay not the shackles of bondage on any, for all have the same pretensions to freedom as thou; disturb none in their innocent pleasures; refuse to none that help which thou art able to afford; hinder no man in his endeavours after perfection;

and let the possessions, the wealth, the liberty, the privileges, the joys, of every man, be sacred to thee !

Art thou the priest of nature ? and wouldst thou maintain this dignity ? Then be not indifferent, be not insensible to the wonders of almighty wisdom and goodness which surround thee on all sides. Hearken to the voice of nature, take up her song of praise ; feel the joy of every living thing, and let thy heart imbibe, and thy tongue pronounce, what it can neither express nor feel, and offer up thanksgiving and praise, in the name of all, to him who made both thee and them, who hath exalted thee so highly, and to whom all glory and praise belong for ever.

1929, pp. 223-224.

E S T I M A T E III.

HOW AND BY WHAT MEANS

C H R I S T I A N I T Y

R E S T O R E S T H E

D I G N I T Y O F M A N.

Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

Psalms viii. 6.

CHITAMISHI

ХАСАН ТАЙШУТЫ СИАМОК

ХАСАН ТАЙШУТЫ СИАМОК

ИАМТОУТИНГД

„slogas or), usitj tewol skift o' gwid about fleni no⁴ X.
Liongpi hata, yioig aliv' mid borwoto ited bag.
D. illuy' tuiid'.

S-31

HOW AND BY WHAT MEANS

C H R I S T I A N I T Y

**RESTORES THE NATURAL
DIGNITY OF M A N.**

IT is certain, that man possesses a great intrinsic dignity, and let him be ever so slight an observer, he cannot be totally blind to it. It is no less certain, that error and vice, superstition and slavery, have very much obscured its native splendor; and there have been times, when the pre-eminence, and the nobility of man, when his relationship to God, and his destination to a higher perfection, were hardly discernible. Into what a condition of weakness and debility, and self-degradation, hath he not formerly been, is not still sunk, in many

nations of the world ! And how much deeper yet would he not have fallen from that dignity, if God had left him to himself ; if he had not put a stop to his progressively increasing corruption and misery ! But what has not God done in this respect for man, in every age, and in every nation ! How often has he raised up, among his brethren, souls of a finer and a nobler sentiment, spirits of a deeper penetration, of more eminent powers, and more extensive operation ; who have been shining lights in their generation, for inspiring a new life into multitudes that were dead in trespasses and sins, for communicating to them a fresh activity in goodness, and for reaching out a hand to sensual men, for lifting them above their sensuality, and for recalling them nearer to their high vocation ! How much has not God in particular done by his son Jesus, for the restoration of the human race ! was not this the ultimate scope

of

of the whole of his great work on earth? How much has God honoured and exalted man by his intimate relationship and connection with his son, the first-born among all creatures! And what noble sentiments does Christianity inspire into its true confessors! How much does it extend the circle of their view, and the sphere of their action! What great achievements does it not render them capable of, and how it ennobles all they think and do! Certainly, a Christian, who is so in deed and in truth, is one that, above all men, displays the dignity of man in its brightest splendour, in its most various and most noble effects! O Sirs! could I but give you all, who bear the name of Christians, the conviction of this truth; how superfluous then would demonstrations be! Grateful joy at our restored dignity, and incitements to preserve it, would then be our only employment. But we must proceed to set the argument arising from the pre-eminent dignity of the

Christian, in its true point of view. And this shall be the subject and aim of my present discourse. I will endeavour to answer the question : how, and how far, hath Christianity rekindled in man the sentiment of his dignity, strengthened and guided him to the maintenance of it ?

Christianity places our conduct towards God in the fullest light ; it teaches us, how great an interest God takes in the welfare of man, and how much he has done, and still does for him ; it informs us of providence and the government of God, of his constant presence every where ; of his sovereign inspection over all things ; of his influence upon all things ; and promises us his particular assistance as often as we stand in need of it ; it sets conspicuously before us the dignity of man in the person of Jesus, in his conduct, and his fortunes ; and points out to us thereby what the nature of man is capable of ; and to

to what degree of perfection it is able to arrive; it declares to us an immortality, everlasting life, a never-ending, an always increasing felicity; it acquaints us with the close connection of our present with our future condition; and by all these means Christianity promotes the sentiment and the restoration of the dignity of man.

First, I say, Christianity places our conduct towards God in its fullest light; and thereby gives man the sentiment of his dignity, and enables him to maintain it. Is man then to imagine himself the work of blind chance, or a son of the earth, in the strictest sense of the word; may he boast of no other origin than that of the plants; is he derived, like the insects, from foulness and corruption? Can he not elevate himself by meditation and faith, to God himself; or does he not know this God as the Creator of the world, as the Father of mankind? How little value then must

his existence and his nature be of in his sight ! What is more insignificant than the sport of hazard, which destroys to-morrow what it produced to-day, which does not act by design and rule, and is continually in contradiction with itself ! What is more empty and vain, than the existence of a heap of dust in this or the other form ; which, being nothing but dust, must sooner or later be wholly decomposed, and fall for ever into dusty atoms ! And were not these the low representations made by numbers of the wise and the unwise among the heathens, concerning man and his origin ? — How totally opposite is the instruction Christianity gives us on this matter ! It proclaims aloud to every one of its confessors : God, the only, the eternal, the supremely perfect God, is thy Creator and Father, as well as the Creator of the world, of all the hosts of heaven, and of all the inhabitants of the earth. Neither chance nor fate called thee into being ; but supreme

preme wisdom and goodness gave thee life and breath, and all things. Thou art no earth-born creature : thou art the son, the daughter of God, the most high ; thou art of divine descent, created in the likeness of God, capable of communication with him, and of a greater similitude with his perfections! Thou art not altogether dust ; thou art only at present covered by a veil of matter ; the spirit which it cloaths, is exalted far above the dust ; is ordained for a higher, a more important station ; and depends no more on accident for its duration than its production, but upon the will of him who loves thee with the tenderness of a father, and assuredly will not destroy the work of his hands ! And the God who has formed thee is likewise thy preserver, thy sovereign, thy inspector, thy judge, and hereafter will be thy rewarder. If man then stand in such regard towards God ; if he be so intimately connected with the being supremely perfect, with the creator

ator and sovereign of the world; if he be his child; his most beloved, his most favoured child, what a value must this give him in his own eyes! how far is his nature above all inferior creatures! what a sentiment it gives him of his dignity! How can he boast of his descent, and of his fellowship with God, if he degrade himself by unworthy sentiments and ignoble actions? How can he support the dignity of the representative of God, if he have not the ornaments of wisdom and virtue? How can he reflect on his intimacy with the Supreme Intelligence, the pure source of light, and yet walk in darkness?

Christianity teaches us farther, how great an interest God takes in human events, and how much he has done and still does for our welfare; and what a grand idea must this give us of our dignity! how forcibly must it urge us to the maintenance of it! According to the doctrine of Christianity,

tianity, we are not the creatures of a God who taketh no care of his creation, and leaves the beings he has formed to themselves ; we are not the offspring of a father who disowns his children, who does not concern himself about them, and is indifferent to their happiness or misery. No ; God does not, according to this comfortable doctrine, leave man unnoticed ; does not deny him his fatherly tenderness and love ; does not leave the fortunes of his feeble, helpless, untutored children, to blind fate, or abandon them to their ignorance. No ; from their first progenitor, downwards to the latest posteirty, has he, he himself, provided for their support, their instruction, their guidance, their education, their advancement to a higher perfection. He has constantly revealed himself to them in various ways ; constantly showered unnumbered benefits upon them ; sometimes chastising them in love, and sometimes blessing them with his bounty ; he

he has constantly been near to them, and has left no means untried for the improvement of their minds, and the amelioration of their hearts. When has he withheld his fructifying influence from nature? when has he denied his invigorating power to the human spirit? when withdrawn from it the incitements, the strongest incitements to its developement and proficiency? At what time has he covered the earth, or even any region of it, with such total darkness, as not to afford one ray of light, one pure beam to penetrate the gloom? When did such universal corruption prevail upon it, that nothing happened to weaken or controul it? How often has he sent wise and good men as his delegates to their brethren? How frequently has his providence, by various ways, united brighter countries with those that lay in darkness, mixed enlightened persons among the raw, untutored vulgar, and the best with the worst of men! How full of wisdom and good-

goodness were his dealings with the posterity of Jacob, the education he gave them, and by their means to so many other nations ! And how much, how inexprefibly much, has he done at length for man by his son Jesus ! What a teacher of truth, what a safe and sure guide in the way of virtue and happiness has he sent us in him ! What a mighty helper and deliverer ; what a bountiful lord and king ! What revelations of his will, what assurances and proofs of his favour and love, what promises and views of futurity, what comfort, what new powers has he not sent down from heaven by this exalted personage, his glorious representative ! And shall man, for whom God cares so much ; shall man, for whom he has done and still does so great things ; shall man, for whom God raised up the son of his love, and for confirmation of his truth, allowed him to die ; is this man a contemptible, an insignificant creature ? Must he not be of great value, must

must he not have a pre-eminent dignity ? Must he not feel this dignity ; must he not be happy in the sentiment of it whenever he meditates thereon ; when he considers how much he is esteemed of his God, how graciously the Most High is disposed towards him, and with what paternal tenderness he cares for him ? Cause and effect, means and end, are in the closest connection in the mind of God ; and whatever he favours with such peculiar attention and regard must certainly be, either in itself and its nature, or in its destination, of the greatest, of the utmost importance.

Farther : Christianity places, thirdly, the doctrine of the divine providence and government of the world in the clearest light ; it proclaims to us the constant presence of God with all things, his supreme inspection over all, his influence in all, and promises us his particular assistance as often as we have occasion for it. And how much must this cause a man to feel his own dignity and worth !

worth! how forcibly must it urge him to the maintenance of it! By this doctrine, all that a man does and all that befalls him, every thing that happens in the world, wears another aspect, and becomes of more importance than it otherwise could. These doctrines spread the clearest light on every thing that else would be attributed to chance and the fortunes of mankind, and which must lower a man in his own eyes. To be left to himself, without the superintendance of the great Regent, without the illumination and guidance of an Almighty and benevolent Father; placed upon so changeable and so perplexed a scene; so many dangers to undergo; under no direction but the caprice of chance, unsheltered from the attack of artifice and iniquity; destitute of all refuge in adversity, of all assistance in perils; how weak, how miserable, how contemptible, must man become! how often would he be tempted to envy the lot of the beasts of the field! But, irradiated as he is by the light, how can he do other-

wise than exalt his spirit ! what peace, what courage, what confidence, must not this afford him ! what design, what connection, what order, does it not shew him, where every thing before appeared in confusion, in contradiction, and at open strife ! The Christian may now hold this language to himself : God, the omniscient, the all-bountiful, who rules my lot, the lot of all mankind, and of all worlds ; he surroundeth all, overseeth, directeth, and conducteth all, the small as well as the great, the evil as well as the good ; in his hand are all animate and all inanimate creatures, all causes and powers, and without his will no atom can change its place, no hair fall off from my head, no man do me harm, no pleasure, no misfortune attend me ; and all that he wills and ordains, is right and good, and constantly the best. He sees in the clearest light, where I am surrounded by the deepest darkness ; he provides for me where I can find nothing to

procure; and makes that to be the means of my perfection and happiness, which I thought calamity and distress. He, the Almighty, the most bountiful, is constantly near me with his help, is acquainted with all my wants, hears all my sighs, manifests his strength in my weakness, guides and conducts me by his spirit, carries on his designs on earth by me, and is ever ready to do more in us and by us than we are able to ask or think. He, the omniscient, the omnipresent, is ever with me, is ever about me. He knoweth my heart, is the infallible witness of all I think and do, he seeth in secret, and will reward that openly which was done in private. His judgement is pure righteousness and truth, his approbation is constantly sincere, and is of immensely more value than all the applause of the world, than all the possessions and all the glories of the earth. And how awful then must be the destination of the man, who believes

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such a providence, who thus walks under the inspection of God, who thus acts in his presence, who esteems himself an instrument in the hand of God, a means to the execution of his designs! how important must he consider the business he has to transact upon the earth! how strong must he feel himself in the assurance of divine support! what power and courage must he find in himself to do every good action under the eyes of his Father and Judge! how generously, how greatly will he think and act even in the absence of all human witnesses, when destitute of all human approbation, and even amidst the ingratitude of the world! how undismayed will he be amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life! how tranquil and confident will he lift up his eyes on high in reverence to God, as the best and wisest ruler and Father of him and the whole creation!

Christianity displays clearly to us, in the fourth place, the dignity of man in the person of Jesus, his restorer and chief, in his conduct and the events in which he was concerned, and teaches us therein, in as comprehensible, as incontrovertible a manner, what human nature is capable of, and to what height of perfection it may ascend. Yes, Sirs, in Jesus, our relation, our brother, our friend, whose life is so closely connected with our lives, his fortunes so inseparably united to ours, in him our dignity appears in its unfulfilled purity, in its perfect splendour. What wisdom, what virtue, what piety, did he not display ! what love towards God and man did not animate him ! what did he not perform ! and how pure, how beneficent were all his views in whatever he did ! what did he not endure ; and how willingly, how stedfastly, how piously, did he exert his patience ! what condescensions, what sacrifices, what uninterrupted

obedience to his heavenly Father, what indefatigable zeal in beneficence, what incessant endeavours to reach the end of his high calling, did he not testify during the whole course of his life on earth ! what temptations were ever able to conquer him, what wrongs could irritate him, what dangers alarm him, what difficulty discourage, or what sufferings make him impatient ! and to what a pitch of power, of honour, of glory, by all this did he attain ! how great, how immensely great, is now his sphere of action ! how illustrious is manhood now exalted to the right hand of the Father ! how should not now, and how should not hereafter, every knee submissively bow to him our chief, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ! Acknowledge here, O man, the dignity of thy nature ! here feel what thou, as man, mayest do, what thou mayest endure, what thou mayest withstand ; to what a height thou

thou hast power and capacity to raise thyself to, as man! feel the whole value of the privilege whereby God has honoured man, in the person of his chief and restorer! That Jesus, who is now exalted far above all, who so widely rules and acts, is flesh of thy flesh, is thy brother, was a man like thee, was tempted as thou art, was acquainted with grief like thee, and entered into glory through obedience and sorrow! What exercises and trials can now affright thee, what conflicts dismay thee, what sacrifice cost thee too much, what difficulties stop thee in thy course, what pitch of wisdom and virtue, what degree of felicity, can now seem unattainable to thee! Look at him, thy leader and chief, tread in his footsteps, and strive to emulate him; through him thou mayest possess all things, with him be exalted over all, with him prevail and triumph, and hereafter behold and enjoy the glory which the Father hath bestowed on him, and in him

on all mankind who maintain the dignity of their nature !

Lastly, Christianity has revived in man the sentiment of his dignity, and given him the most powerful incitements to maintain it, by the grand doctrine of immortality and everlasting life, which it places in the most conspicuous light, and has connected in the closest manner with what we are and do, and all that happens to us. Though man possessed ever so great privileges over the beasts of the field ; though he felt in himself ever so great powers and faculties for the noblest undertakings ; though he could bring so much to pass, and execute so much good ; how little would all this appear to him, if these privileges, these powers, these faculties, this noble activity, were to be lost to him in a few uncertain quickly-fleeting years, if he must be deprived of them all for ever by death ; had he no fruit to expect from all

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he has here learnt, and done, and suffered, and sacrificed, and practised! how little nourishment for his nobler sentiments, how little incitement to generous actions, to hard but beneficial undertakings, what poor encouragement to incessant endeavours after higher perfection, would man find in his present situation, if death were the period of his existence, if the grave and corruption were the term of all his hopes and exertions! how foolish must the generality of his sacrifices to integrity and virtue appear! and how wise the saying of the fool: “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!”—But now, enlightened by the bright beams of the Gospel, animated by the hope of a blessed immortality, how totally different is the case with man! what a sentiment of his dignity, of his greatness, of his future exaltation, must it awaken in him, when he can say to himself, I live, I think, I labour, I endure, I suffer, I exercise myself for eternity! my present situation

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ation is only a prelude to the future ! my future situation, the continuation and reward of the present ! Whatever I do here draws consequences, unterminating consequences, after it. The worthy and generous actions that I now perform will still rejoice and bless me, after thousands and millions of years. The light which I here spread around me will enlighten me and my brethren beyond the grave ; the good of every kind, I here effect in others and by their means, will proceed in action from everlasting to everlasting, and be always producing more good in infinite progression ; and all that I here meet with has an influence on my future destination for ever. What now oppresses me, and what the world calls misfortune and distress, may be to me the inexhaustible source of pleasure and profit in future. The violence I now do to myself, the hardships, the sorrows I now endure for the love of God and of my fellow-creatures, work together for

for my everlasting good. What can I voluntarily surrender for the sake of God and my conscience, which I shall not receive an hundred fold? what can I give to my brethren, from a right christian heart, that I shall not receive again with usury? what can I sacrifice to my duty, that will not be amply rewarded? Nay, the more I here bestow, the greater will be my gains, and the more I shall have to bestow again. The more I here improve in knowledge, in wisdom, and in virtue, the faster then shall I proceed from one degree of perfection and happiness to another; the nearer shall I approach to Jesus my chieftain and Lord, and, through him, to God supreme. Here I learn to be, and to do, and to enjoy, what in that nobler life I shall more perfectly be, and do, and enjoy. This is the time for sowing, planting, working, and conflicting; then will be the time of harvest, of enjoyment, of repose, and triumph! No; my existence is not confined

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to this fleeting moment : it will continue for ever ! my activity is not bounded by the narrow circle in which I now live and move ; it will always be opening wider, always become larger, and be more diversified. My spiritual powers are not to be lost in dissolution and decay like dust ; they shall continue in operation and effect for ever ; and the more I exert them here, the better I employ them, the more I improve them, so much better shall I use them in the future world, so much the more shall I be capable of still farther improvement. I see before me an unterminating extension of my sight and action, an incessant increase in knowledge, in virtue, in activity, and in bliss ; the whole immensity of God's creation, the whole unnumbered host of intelligent, thinking beings, all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Jesus Christ, the unfathomable depths of divine perfection : what noble employments, what displays of my powers, what pure

pure joys, what everlasting progress, do these afford to my expectations! And, in such views, in such expectations, must I not feel myself happy! can I mistake my relationship with the Supreme Being, my fellowship with Christ and with God? With such prospects, with such expectations, how can I degrade myself by folly and sin, by folly and sin leave my high destination! With such prospects and such expectations shall I be discouraged, and weary of pursuing the great aim of my vocation by acts of beneficence and mercy! shall I spare myself in any considerable effort of my faculties, complain of any sacrifice, which God and conscience order me to make; avoid any opportunity of sowing good seed, and leave any means unemployed of augmenting the harvest of my future wealth! With such a prospect, with such expectations, shall I be terrified at any misfortune, or tremble at the sight of death and the grave! Can either misfortune,

fortune, or death, or the grave, destroy me? Are misfortune, and death, and the grave, any thing but the means and the way to a higher and a greater felicity? No; every exercise of my powers, every opportunity of doing good, must be welcome to me. Every misfortune, that makes me wiser and better, is a blessing to me, and the summons of death is a summons to me, to enter on a better life.—O Sirs, if we think so, and so act, then do we think and act as Christians—how full of light, how important are all things to us! what a value all that we are, and all we do, and all that happens to us, receive from hence! how operative, how effective, must the sentiment of our dignity be!

Wouldst thou then feel and maintain thy dignity, O man! wouldst thou display it in all its lustre! then be a Christian, be wholly Christian, be wholly animated by the sense and spirit of Christianity, believe its

its doctrines with thy whole heart, follow its precepts with stedfast fidelity, firmly repose on its promises, frame thyself upon its founder, Jesus ! The spirit of Christianity will remove every lower sentiment, every unworthy desire from thy soul ; will elevate thy spirit, enlarge thy heart, make thee feel thy powers, and ever transmit thee new ; it will raise thee above all that is visible and earthly, will constantly give thee a greater resemblance to Jesus, the pattern of all human perfection, and constantly unite thee more intimately with God. Animated by the spirit of Christianity, thou wilt justly esteem every faculty, every talent, every power that God hath given thee, carefully incite and exert them, and constantly produce as much good by them as thou canst at present. Informed by the spirit of Christianity, thou wilt not act like a slave ; thou wilt not allow thyself to be governed by any sensual object, or any unruly

unruly passion; thou wilt not cringe with servility before any mortal; thou wilt constantly think and act with generosity and freedom. Animated by the spirit of Christianity, thou wilt ever be more active, more indefatigable in goodness, wilt never be weary in striving after the prize that awaits the conqueror. Animated by the spirit of Christianity, thou wilt already think and act, in this the day of thy mortality, like an immortal being; and wilt perform a thousand acts of goodness, and enjoy a thousand comforts, which he can neither perform or enjoy who is not sensible of his immortality, or cannot rejoice therein. O noble and divine spirit of Christianity! thou spirit of wisdom and power, of love and felicity! mayst thou quicken, warm, and penetrate us all by thy animating influence! rouze us to the noblest sentiments of ourselves! animate us with a godlike energy, with the most active
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zeal in goodness, penetrate and warm us with love towards God and man ! How great, how illustrious will then our dignity be, and how much greater and more illustrious will it become, from one period of our lives to another, and from eternity to eternity !

Worship him who be Yerish
and the sun will go down
and the stars will fall
and the world will end
and the world will end

and the world will end

E S T I M A T E IV.

THE

V A L U E

OF

H U M A N L I F E.

Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.

Psalms cxix. 175.



[301]

THE

V A L U E

of

HUMAN LIFE.

THE desire to live is natural to all men. Neither grief, nor pain, nor misfortune, can totally suppress it; and the generality of men would rather begin again their course on earth, however gloomy, wearisome, or perilous it may have been, and pass again through all its difficulties and dangers, than have them ended by the loss of life. Seldom is the burden of misery so heavy, and the sentiment of it so troublesome; seldom do passion and error blind him so far as to make him pre-

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fer death to life, and non-entity to existence. Very rarely do we find him so pious and so holy as to say from his heart, with the apostle, "I have a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Let us admire and adore the wise goodness of our Creator, who hath given us so innate an attachment to life, so interwoven and connected it with our nature, and thereby such a powerful, such an irresistible inducement to preserve it! But let us dignify this desire to live, by investigating the ground of it, that we may make it stand the test of the soundest reason. To love, and to wish for life, without knowing why or wherefore, is mere animal instinct; but to love it on true and solid principles, and to wish for it in the most upright views, will be no discredit to the philosopher and the christian. Thus the Psalmist is desirous of it in our text. Let my soul live, says he to God, Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee. Would

we do so likewise, Sirs, would we thus wish for life, that we might truly rejoice in, and praise God for it, then we must learn the real value of human life. We must neither esteem it as better or as poorer, neither as more important nor more insignificant, neither as more happy nor more unhappy than it actually is. In one case our attachment to it will be too strong, in the other not strong enough. In both cases we should more or less mistake its destination, and seldom make so good a use of it as we might.

Well then, let us turn our reflections to-day on the value of human life, that we may discover why, and to what purpose, we should wish to live. For examining this matter properly, we must do two things. First shew, what is implied if we would have human life of value, and indeed of great value to us; and then what gives it

this value, or, what makes it desirable and estimable to us.

If we would have our lives to be of real value to us, and rightly appreciate that value, we must learn to understand it, we must seriously reflect upon it, we must consider it on every side and in its whole circuit; we must regard it, not under any false appearance which present or past, pleasant or unpleasant sensations, any fortunate or unfortunate, accidents may throw upon it. We must therefore bring into the account its joys as well as its sorrows, its satisfactions as well as its hardships, its days of delight and pleasure, as well as its hours of pain and grief, the good we enjoy or may enjoy, as well as the evil that befalls us. We must consider it, not as the whole of our existence, not as the capacity and measure of our whole felicity; but only as the beginning, as the lowermost step of our rational being, as the preparation,

tion to a greater and higher happiness; and be thereby induced to lay out foundation, not on prevailing prejudices, but on just experiences, observations, and principles. Whoever, deceived by certain descriptions, represents this earth to himself as an inhospitable desert, as a vale of tears and sorrow, as the abode of darkness and misery; whoever, in opposition to universal experience, imagines that its evils predominate over its satisfactions; whoever, from misanthropy, or ill-humour, at one time thinks that all mankind are fools; and at another knaves, forgetful of his origin and his vocation, finks him beneath the beasts, or considers man only as a comedian that has a part to perform, without any farther consequence or view; and when this part is played, falls back to his primitive nothing; he who comprehends all his prospects and hopes within the moment of present circumstances: for him this life can indeed have no great value;

to him it must be a contemptible object, whose preservation is of no importance, and the loss of it not to be lamented. But is this a true representation of human life? Has then this earth, which God has adorned with such numberless beauties and pleasures, has it the appearance of a desert? Is weeping and wailing so frequent or so loud upon it, that the voice of joy and gladness is nowhere to be heard? does not man pass far more hours in health than in sickness; does he not experience far more bright than gloomy days? In the whole amount, does not the sum of his agreeable sensations very far exceed the sum of his uneasy and painful feelings? Amongst the fools, are there not likewise many intelligent men, and amongst the wicked many good? Is not, upon the whole, much more good than evil practised by them? And how can the philosopher, the christian, mistake the dignity, the nobility, the vocation of man, I mean his reason, his capacity

capacity of constantly becoming more perfect, his immortality, and the connection between what he now is and does with what he is to be and to do for the future; and if he does not mistake them, what a value must this give to his present life!

Should this life then be of great and real value to us, and should we confess and feel that value; then must we properly employ it, and use it to the best and the most rational purposes. We must live with consciousness, with consideration, upon certain principles and in settled views. We must be as active as possible, and active in the best and the most generally useful manner. To live, to live as men, does not imply simply to exist, not barely to have power, but to exert and improve this power, to act inwardly and outwardly, in receiving and communicating happiness, and to be conscious of it. He who leads a vegetative or an animal life; he who sleeps,

sleeps, dreams, trifles, or dissipates his life away; who lives for the day, without reflection or thought; who surrenders himself up to idleness and sloth, or is industrious without aim or design; exerts his powers without any particular view; is always busy, and yet does nothing with all his bustle, always seeking happiness, but never finding it; to such indeed this life must be an insignificant matter. And how great is this last class of men, the class of busy idlers in the world! men that seem to be forever employed, and yet in fact do nothing, bring nothing to effect; nothing of any importance to themselves or to others; nothing that can secure them any lasting satisfaction and joy. Free from any settled employment, from the duties of any particular business, they undertake now one thing, and then another, and are soon weary of both; they run from one company to another, from one amusement to another, ever raising great expectations from them, and ever deceived in their expectations,

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get nothing from these companies, and acquire no recompensing reflections from the enjoyments of these pleasures; can give no account to themselves of this application of their time and of the use of their powers; and, as often as the sentiment, as often as the clear consciousness of their condition arises within them, so often do they feel the emptiness of their hearts, the wearisome monotony, that dissatisfaction, the vanity of their pleasures; are disgusted with life and all its joys, and then exclaim, not from wisdom, but from the involuntary sentiment of their folly, in the words of Solomon, "All, all is vanity!" What great value can there be in life to such men as these! how much more natural is it that it should be a burden, a martyrdom to them! how many have hence been induced to lay it down as a load they could no longer bear! No; for him alone who knows and constantly pursues the true ends of life; who has a determinate occupation;

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who exerts his powers with consciousness, upon solid principles, and does good with them ; who can give himself a satisfactory account of what he does and accomplishes with them ; who by every step he takes, by every day he survives, approaches nearer to perfection; who, like a reasonable creature, like a christian, sees not barely the present, but is continually regarding the future ; lives not barely for this present moment of time, but for the unending ages of eternity. The other, the unwise, the fool, the busy idler, wanders about in error, and must necessarily at length be weary of his wanderings : while this, the wise man, the christian, has a firm period in view, worthy of the ardour with which he pursues his course ; he never loses it from his sight, and the nearer he approaches it, the brighter it appears before him.

Lastly,

Lastly, if this life is to be of great and real value to us, and if we would know and be sensible of its worth, we must effectually enjoy, and enjoy with consciousness, the goods and satisfactions it affords. We must be at least as sensible and susceptible of the good and agreeable, as of the evil and disastrous it contains. If we pass through the world as if our senses were useless, or with unfeeling and hardened hearts ; a thousand beauties that surround us will be unobserved, a thousand sources of pleasure that invite us to partake of them will be left unexplored ; or if we had rather scrutinize for defects, than look out for perfections ; then, indeed, must this life appear to us under a dark and mournful aspect, and contain but little value for us. But does any thing lose of its real value, merely because we do not observe or neglect to make use of its advantages ? No ; we must open our hearts and our senses to agreeable impressions ; to the impressions

pressions which the advantages, the pleasures, the joys of life are endeavouring to make upon us; we must see, and feel, and use, and enjoy the beauties, the blessings, that present themselves to us in such diversified forms, and invite us to use them in such various ways; we must not trample on the flowers we meet with in the path of life, with haughty disdain; we must not ungratefully reject the recreations and recompences of which our heavenly father hath not suffered the roughest way to be totally destitute, and never turn our eyes from that glorious prospect which terminates our view. Only thus shall we rightly estimate the intrinsic value of life, and learn to reckon it of high importance, and worthy of our concern.

And what gives it now this great value? What makes this life so momentous and important? In this life we may learn much truth and goodness; attempt and execute

many good undertakings, enjoy many blessings ; and by acting and enjoying render ourselves fit for still better and greater things in the future world.

Four articles which must give great value to this life, in the eyes of all reflecting persons, imperfect as it is.

Our life is therefore of great value ; first, as we may learn in it so much truth and goodness, and may so much advance our spiritual perfection. All that concerns us, all the events that befall us, indigence and infirmity, business and pleasures, joys and sorrows, unite themselves in this regard ; every thing is either cause, or means, or incitement to improve, to rouse, to exert, to perfectionate our spiritual powers ; every thing teaches us to think, to consider, to investigate ; every thing is ordained and adapted to make us rational of sensual creatures, of relations to the beasts to make

us the kindred of angels. And how many ideas, how much knowledge, how much illumination of every kind, may we collect in this life by experience, by observation, by reflection, by instruction, and by conversation ! how the sphere of our view and comprehension is enlarged every year ! how considerable is the circuit and extent of human knowledge ! indeed, what we know is extremely little in comparison with what we do not and cannot know ; but still of itself is much, much for creatures who are only at the first period of thought ; much for scholars, for beginners, who only live and think from yesterday, and who are to live and think for ever. How high has the human spirit soared in numberless respects ! how far has it raised itself above visible things ! it has risen even up to the divinity, to the first, the eternal cause of all things, and feels itself happy in the adoration of supreme perfection : how much does it comprehend, survey, and compare,

compare, by meditation! and where are the limits that it cannot transcend! When has man learned so much, and so much exercised himself in thought, that he has not much more still to learn, and may not employ himself much better? Who can reckon up the number of representations that find place in one human mind of ordinary capacity? and when is the sum total of them so great, that it may not yet be immensely increased? Indeed, we neither can nor ought to be all scholars, all apply the greatest part of our lives to the investigation of truth, to reflections on invisible things, to the improvement and the augmentation of our knowledge. But we may all learn much, actually learn much, and all advance by many considerable strides on the way of knowledge and spiritual perfection. We may all learn to think, to think with consciousness, to think rationally: and if we be wise men, if we be christians, we learn to soar above the

senses, and to govern ourselves; we learn to be virtuous, to be pious, to act upon sound principles, from pure and generous motives; we learn to know God, to love him, to converse, and to have communications with him; and the longer we live, and thus employ our lives, so much the better do we learn all this, so much the apter are we in all these matters, so much the easier, and with so much the better effect, can we apply our mental powers to them; so much the more do we heap up treasures of useful knowledge, and juster views; so much the nearer do we approach to perfection. Something may be added to our improvements every year, every day, every hour, and it is purely our own fault when this is not the case. Who would not then in this view cry out, with the Psalmist, “Lord, let my soul live, and it shall praise thee!” that it may ever advance in the knowledge of truth, in the knowledge of thee who art the fountain of

of all truth; that it may ever be improving its thoughts, and ever learn to employ all its powers in a better and a worthier manner.

This life is, farther, of great value: it is highly estimable, as we may attempt and execute much good therein. And, in fact, Sirs, how much may we not do for ourselves and for others, for the large and the little society to which we belong! how far, either mediately or immediately, may we operate about us! what a manifold influence, and of what immense extent, may we have on the happiness of our brethren! and to this purpose, we need neither be sovereigns, nor ministers of state, nor heroes, nor inventors of new discoveries, nor leaders and teachers of the people; in every condition, in every station, in every walk of life, in every lawful vocation, we may daily and hourly effect some good. We have only to fulfil our duties, to dis-

charge them continually in the best manner, constantly to pursue the path of christian integrity and virtue, and in every circumstance to do what the love of God and man invites us to ; so spread goodness in general all around us, afflicting none, and hurting none, but rejoicing thousands, and being useful to thousands more: What a beneficent influence has order, application, industry, fidelity, and consciousness in affairs, upon all those with whom we have to do, who stand in a near or remote connection with us ! what a genial light, what a brightness does every good, every generous action, throw around it ! and how fruitful is it frequently in as good as generous actions ! How much may we do by words and works, by our behaviour among the members of our family, our acquaintance, our friends, and our fellow-citizens, and again by them among others, and probably among people utterly unknown to us, and far distant from us ! Who can

number

number all the blessed consequences often produced by a prudent piece of advice, a word well-spoken with feeling and energy; a good christian dealing, an admonition properly introduced, a magnanimous sacrifice of some supposed advantage, a public-spirited undertaking—and will produce in future? And when are we wanting of an opportunity either to comfort the mourner, to cheer the wretched, to assist the indigent, or to support some poor and needy person? When is there a scarcity of opportunities for giving instruction to the ignorant, for the amendment and conversion of the wicked, for confirming and delighting the good, for encouraging and supporting public establishments for the common good, and by all these means to provide for our own? How few days, how few hours of our lives, without our own fault, pass quite destitute of occasions, quite void of incitements to do some kind of good, to further our beneficent designs,

or to bring them to effect about us ! May not therefore every day, every hour, we pass as wise men, as christians, increase the quantity of the good we do, and the sum of human happiness promoted by our means ? and how great must this sum be in the course of a whole life spent according to the precepts of christian wisdom and virtue ! What think ye, Sirs, is a life, that may be so rich in good consequences and effects, without any worth ? may it not be of the highest value ? may not a man say, upon the soundest principles, " Let my " soul live, and it shall praise thee," that it may glorify thee by righteousness and beneficence, and that it may produce more joy and felicity around it !

This life has, thirdly, a great value : it is highly estimable, as we may enjoy so much good in it. How manifold, how rich, how inexhaustible, are the sources of pleasure, delight, and joy, which God hath

hath opened and supplied to us, in nature, in religion, in domestic, in civil, and in human society ! Of what various and inexhaustible impressions and feelings are we not rendered capable by our senses, our understanding, and our heart ! Certainly, if we were less inconsiderate, less cold and insensible, than we so frequently are, we should be astonished at the number of blessings we daily and hourly enjoy ; we should acknowledge, and feel at our hearts, the superabundance, the great and manifest superabundance of good over evil in life ; and, full of admiration and gratitude, should exclaim, Lord ! the whole earth, and our whole lives, are full of thy goodness !—What delightful sensations have we had, during the greatest part of our lives, from our health and vigour ! what pleasure there is connected with eating and drinking, with waking and sleeping, with employment and rest, with the use of our organs of sense, and the application of our

our mental powers ! what delight does silence, and the meditations of retirement, afford us ! and what delights in social converse and the imparting of our thoughts and feelings to others ! what joys do not the father and the mother of a family feel in the comforts of their dwelling, in the enjoyment of domestic felicity ! what joys are felt by the friend of the heart, and in the society of a friend ! and what purer, what higher joys, does the man, the christian, imbibe, by the pious exaltation of his heart to God, by the public and private adoration of the Most High, by his communications with the spirit of supreme perfection ! what satisfaction, what agreeable, what delightful sensations are we not inspired with by every labour successfully ended, every vanquished weakness, every surmounted sorrow, every good action, every advance to perfection, every view of our future felicity !—and how much alleviation of toil, how much animation and comfort

comfort in sorrows, how much help in the hour of need, how much exertion, or courage and strength, in danger, does not a wise and kind providence impart in us, or communicate to us! and how much light is shed even on all the gloomy and less fortunate periods of our lives, nay, what day, what hour of our lives, does not bring with it some kind of satisfaction and pleasure, either in regard to the goodness of our author and preserver, or to the recreation of the wise man, that is, the Christian! And if some gloomy hours, some dismal days succeed, how are they lost among the far, far greater number of more happy, more delightful days and hours! But how much value must such a life be of, that is so rich in satisfactions and joys, to every man of reflection and sentiment! what a noble present must the preservation and continuance of it be in his sight! and how much reason has he to pray to God in the words of the Psalmist, " Let my soul live, and it

" shall

" shall praise thee!" that it may enjoy thy bounty, and praise thee with gladness and delight!

But that which gives the greatest weight to these arguments for highly prizes human life, what renders it most estimable, is, that during the course of it we may fit and capacitate ourselves for better and greater objects in the world to come. Without this prospect, our knowledge and spiritual perfection would have but little value, our virtue but little attraction and compensation, our joy but little satisfaction, and still less continuance. Chiefly by the connection of the present with the future, by the influence this has upon that, all we now are, and do, and enjoy, is of real importance, and brings unending consequences after it. At present we can do nothing for becoming wiser, better, and more pious, which does not prepare and smoothen the way for us to a higher degree

gree of perfection and happiness in the future world. We can now perform no good action which does not produce everlasting satisfaction. We now enjoy no innocent, generous delight, which does not render us capable of still greater delights, and secure them to us. We are now working and labouring for eternity. We can now turn our endeavours and toils into pleasure, sorrows into joys, and losses into gains. Here we may learn ; and there we shall put what we have learnt to the best and highest use : here our powers grow strong by practice ; there they will be applied to loftier things : here we sow good seed ; there we shall reap of it happiness and glory : here we make ourselves fit for converse with more exalted spirits ; there we shall actually enjoy their converse : here we may resemble Jesus, our chieftain and Lord, in virtuous and pious sentiments ; there be one with him in glory and bliss : here satisfy our wishes by approaching

nearer to the Deity ; there in intimate communications with him. The longer then we live in this world, the more good we imagine, and perform, and promote, and enjoy here, the greater perfection and felicity await us hereafter. The purer and richer our sowing here, the richer and more glorious will be our harvest hereafter. Thus may every day and every hour of this life contribute to lay the foundation of immarcessible honours, of ever blooming joys. And shall such a life, a life so great in its consequences, and of everlasting duration, shall such a life be of no great value in our eyes ? Shall it not inspire us with the wish of the Psalmist : “ Let my soul live, O God ! and it shall praise thee ! ” that it may here be expert in thy praise, and thereby more worthily praise thee hereafter !

Yes, Sirs, human life is incontestably of great and real value : a desire of its preservation

preservation and continuance is not unworthy either of the wise man or the christian. It is the school of wisdom, the school of virtue, the first step to our perfection, an inexhaustible source of pleasures and joys, the preparatory station to a more exalted, to an everlasting life. Rejoice then in it, rejoice in your lives; thank God daily for these presents of his bounty; acknowledge and feel its value and its high destination; support, and support it carefully; use it worthily; pursue its affairs with pleasure and fidelity; enjoy its satisfactions and delights with grateful and joyful hearts; bear its hardships and sorrows without murmuring; exercise your gifts and powers; strive constantly to learn more useful knowledge, constantly to do more good, to enjoy more pure and more generous satisfactions, constantly to become wiser and better, and a greater blessing to all about you. Never be weary in well-doing, and in promoting the happiness of your

your fellow-creatures and yourselves, that you may hope incessantly to reap in due time; work, like our great leader and precursor Jesus, while it is day, that the night may not come upon you before your task be finished; redeem the time with care, and mark as much as possible every day of your lives with some good action; regard and treat all things according to their reference with the future, and let the sublime, the joyful consideration of a better and an everlasting life be constantly present with your spirit.

E S T I M A T E V.

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H E A L T H.

No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but now
fislieth and cherisheth it, &c. Ephes. v. 29.

VOL. I.

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THE

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IT seems superfluous to admonish mankind of the great value of health, and to induce them by arguments to fulfill the duties incumbent upon them in this respect. Who does not readily shun every thing that is called sorrow and pain? who does not hold his health in high estimation? who is not desirous of maintaining and preserving it unimpaired even to extreme old age? who will slight any thing that he is certain will be prejudicial to him in this regard? No man, says the apostle, ever yet

hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it. All this, Sirs, generally speaking, is very true. But probably we do not consider the matter sufficiently as a duty. Perhaps we do not set a sufficient value upon health, or not upon right principles. Perhaps we do not plainly perceive how important Christianity is in this regard to its true confessors. And from all these causes we fall into many errors, which, if we had a plainer and juster conception of them, we should certainly avoid. Well then, let me submit a few suggestions to your consideration hereupon. And to this end, let us examine into the value of health; then consider the duties we have to fulfill in that respect; and, lastly, we will ponder the christian doctrine, to see how it much is adapted to assist us in the performance of these duties, and to promote our felicity even in that respect.

Health is, doubtless, of great value to us. It is the first and principal of all the outward blessings we enjoy; the ground and means of the free enjoyment and best use of all the rest. It far excels all riches, all power, and honour, and every splendid pre-eminence; which, by the loss or decay of this, must lose almost the whole of their value. This is a matter which neither our own experience, nor that of others, will allow us to doubt of. Would you sensibly feel this truth? you have only to recollect the hours, the days, you have probably past in sickness and pain; the hours and the days in which you have been dispirited, enfeebled, and utterly unfit for all useful occupation; on all the incapacity and aversion for the enjoyment of every pleasure and satisfaction of life, when you were lying on a gloomy couch, and underwent, with every returning day, with every returning night, full of restlessness and anxiety, fresh pains and sorrows, and had

to dread the total dissolution of your body. And then compare such situation with the activity and chearfulness that now animate you while you are in health ; the delightful sentiment you have of your powers ; the facility and freedom with which you move and use your body, and all its members ; the vivacity wherewith you undertake and perform your busines ; the relish with which you can enjoy the pleasures of life ; the undisturbed tranquillity with which at night you throw yourself into the arms of sleep, and the chearful serenity with which you behold the rising day.—Or, if you have been so happy as to have had no personal experience of pain and sicknes, then consider your friends and acquaintance, who groan under the burden of such afflictions, or lead a life of infirmity and langour, and for a moment place yourself in their condition, and set their circumstances against your own : and, unless you are totally void of sensibility, a genial consciousness

sciousness of the high worth of health will flow over your heart, accompanied by the sincerest gratitude towards God ; you will look upon it as the richest cordial of life, and acknowledge it to be the comfort, without which all others have hardly any value.

And indeed, without health, what are all the beauties, all the bounties, all the delights of nature, and all the joys of social life ; when all nature appears in festal splendor to the man in health ; while the unclouded sky, and the variegated earth, enamelled by a thousand flowers, expand his heart ; while he unites in the jubilations of all living creatures rejoicing in existence, with a gladsome spirit ?—The man labouring under sickness and infirmity disregards all this as nothing, or prizes it at a slender rate. Every thing appears to him in a mournful garb ; all nature seems clad in sorrow, and the world about him empty and dead ; the earth without form, and

void, and darkness upon the face of creation. And if he cannot stifle the sweet sounds of joy that burst upon his soul; yet he hears them with inward sadness, and feels the irksomeness of his life and his own deficiency of joy but so much the deeper. While the man in health is displaying his faculties and powers to the pleasure and advantage of society, and bringing his designs to effect; thereby magnifying the value of them even in his own eyes; while he is enjoying the most diversified pleasures, the esteem and love, the friendship of his acquaintance; is finding on all sides entertainment to his mind, food for his spirit, and comfort to his heart; and, in all these respects, is able to give as much as he receives: all this time the sick and infirm is confined to his close apartment, to his dismal couch, to a small circle of people, who probably attend him more out of obligation and necessity than from affection, and is perhaps

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a burden to himself and to others ; and how easily may he sink under the weight of uneasiness and sorrows, if he has not learnt to find sources in himself of satisfaction and joy !—No ; without health, there is no real enjoyment of life, no inward cheerful sentiment of the faculties of either soul or body, no free and confident exertion of their abilities ; but, instead, a dismal consciousness of infirmity and pain, gloomy recollections of the past, and anxious concerns about future sufferings, dreadful sentiment of declining faculties, and fear of the constant threats of their total decay. And who can represent to himself these dismal circumstances to which mankind is doomed, without feeling the value of their contrasts, the importance of health ?

Health has farther a great value, as a means to higher purposes, as a means of promoting our intrinsic perfection, and our usefulness in the world. How much are

we able to do, if we be but in health! how we are encouraged and animated to all things! for what labours and what undertakings do we think we have not sufficient strength! what difficulties or obstacles do we allow to deter us from them? how much easier is reflection and every application and use of our mental powers! how much happier do all our enterprises tend to success! what efforts, and what indefatigable perseverance, does it not allow us to exert! how little do we make of danger! how many adverse events does it not enable us to bear, without being much dismayed at them! how capable are we likewise of performing all the duties of our station, even the hardest, with chearfulness and pleasure, and of labouring at our own felicity, as well as that of our brethren, with activity and success! how ready to spread happiness and joy, of various kinds, on all around us!

How

How very different is the case in general with such as are in the opposite condition ! how various and how great are the prejudices which infirmities and the loss of health draw after them to ourselves, and to others, in regard of morality, and the performance of the duty of general utility ! The want of health most commonly weakens and destroys our spirits also. And when it threatens the ruin of the former, it likewise threatens this with lethargy, inactivity, and lifelessness ; either totally incapacitating us for deep and continued reflection, or making it extremely difficult. It darkens and confuses our former conceptions and ideas, and lays terrible difficulties in the way of every attempt to strengthen and improve our faculties. It frequently eclipses every light and truth, and certainty, before our eyes. Darkness and doubt obscure our weakened spirit ; and our deadened heart can feel the influence of no clearing hope, and every sentiment of the higher and

and nobler kinds is totally excluded. How oft and how easily are we reduced by the want of health to a gloomy and repining temper, to impatient murmurings, to discontentedness with our condition, and the methods of providence! and how easily may all this dispirit us in the pursuit of a superior perfection! how sadly impede us from becoming so wise and so good as we otherwise might!

I am not ignorant that sufferings, and that of every kind, when rightly deemed of and properly applied, contribute much to our spiritual perfection, that they are adapted to render us wiser and better. But we need not be afraid, that we shall be deprived of the advantages of afflictions, though we perfectly understand the full value of health, and fulfill our duties in the preservation of it in ever so conscientious a manner. The inconstancy of all worldly things, the instability of fortune, the part we

we take in the welfare of others, so many unsuccessful labours, disappointed expectations, and insurmountable difficulties, will always furnish us with opportunities enough for improvement in the wisdom and virtues of Christianity.—And then certainly the fruit produced by a strong and healthy tree from its natural soil, will be sounder, riper, and of a finer flavour, than that which is forced by artificial heat into an unnatural maturity.

This is not all. Still more various and more grievous is the damage occasioned by the loss of health to ourselves and to others, when we ourselves are guilty of it. And we must undoubtedly be affected if we examine and judge of the matter on its moral side, as in that respect it is of the utmost importance. If we hurt or ruin our health, we not only inflict a misfortune on ourselves thereby, but are likewise cruel to those who are connected with us, or dependent

pendent on us. We spread concern, affliction, and grief on all about us, in a narrower or a larger circle, according to our situation in life. We wound and afflict some, and drive others to impatience, to anger, and to guilty violation of their duties. —Nay, more; we thereby hurt the whole society in which we live. We rob it of our services, or add to their burdens who had already enough to bear. We deprive ourselves of the means and the opportunities of being useful to others, or of promoting their advantage in a higher degree. We, perhaps, stop short in the fairest and most laudable course, and leave our best works and undertakings unfinished. And what sources of satisfaction and pleasure for future times, and even for eternity, do we thus exclude ourselves from!

By impairing and ruining our health, we not unfrequently do an irreparable injury to such as have the justest title to our whole affection,

affection, as being connected with us in the closest ties. We cut them off from the advice, the protection, the assistance, the provision, they have the strictest right to expect from us, and which they cannot so confidently hope to receive from any other. We thereby plunge them, perhaps, into the utmost want and distress, bring them to the brink of perdition, and leave them a prey to poverty, seduction, and misery. Let parents particularly reflect on this; and when they are inclined to extravagance, intemperance, and pleasure, to violent passions, or to any thing that may be hurtful to their health, let them cast one serious compassionate look at their uneducated, helpless infants, or children who stand still more in need of their advice and care; and it must bring them back to the discharge of their duties, and make it again their delight!

Nay,

Nay, it happens not unseldom, that he who impairs or destroys his health by irregular living, renders himself guilty of a crime against his posterity, and diffuses misery and death upon those who open their eyes to the light of the world long after he is no more. Children produced from infirm, unhealthy parents, commonly become parents to children still more unhealthy and infirm, and these have again a like posterity, till the race, sinking deeper and deeper under the burden of its various diseases and infirmities, at length dies out and is extinct.

So variously and so widely extend the injuries that proceed from the impairing and the ruining of our health to ourselves and others, that our account must be heavy when we have rendered ourselves guilty of it.

And

And now, Sirs, will any man seek his honour and renown in such a practice? will he venture to call it true courage, or reckon it strength of mind, to despise all care of his health, or not to regard it; to trust to his youth or his strength, and attack it on purpose by irregularity and riot, and slight the admonitions of prudence? No: it is rashness; it is folly. Undoubtedly it is folly, for a man willingly to endanger the loss of so invaluable, so indispensable a blessing as Life, and to occasion such manifold, and frequently such irreparable injuries to himself and others. Consider this, all you that are still in the bloom of life, and in the possession of all your vigour. Reflect upon it not barely as to the present, but also to the future. Practise not with your health and strength, as if they could never be weakened or worn out. Lavish them not away in the service of vice, or a loose and inordinate conduct. Forget not, that, in advanced years, many

occupations and duties, many hardships and sufferings, await you, which will then fall heavy or gently upon you, as you have managed your early years and your youthful vigour.

And let no man say, when he transgresses the bounds of moderation in eating and drinking, in the indulgence of anger or any other passion, “That is my business ; if I do an injury I do it to myself alone ; it is I that must suffer and do penance for my folly.” Certainly thou wilt, whoever thou art that thinkest and speakest thus ; thou wilt suffer and do penance for it, and probably much more, and much longer than thou dost at present imagine ; and thou wilt suffer what thou hast deserved. But thou canst not suffer alone, others must suffer with thee ; and they innocently suffer. Is this no injustice ? no crime ? does this deserve no punishment ? or how can a parent, how can any person who stands in
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relationship to others, weaken his health and destroy his faculties, and thus render himself unfit for his business and the duties of his calling, without injuring at the same time many others, directly or indirectly, at present, or in the sequel, in body or in mind, without diminishing the quantity of abilities, and the good arising from them to the common welfare ?

Can we possibly reflect upon all this, and entertain the smallest doubt that health is of the utmost importance ; that the abuse of it is highly criminal, and that it is by no means indifferent how we behave in regard of it ? And how then must we conduct ourselves in this regard ? what are the duties and obligations we here lie under ?

We must, above all things, esteem health as a gift of the divine bounty, and as granted us for the most important pur-

poses, connected as it is with our perfection and happiness. And here we are to avoid certain false conceptions of the little value and low destination of the human body ; conceptions by which it is not unfrequently represented as the prison, as the dungeon of the soul, the greatest impediment to its perfection. All such representations are the offspring of a gloomy and murmuring turn of mind, or of a heated and fanatical imagination, which misleads the man to pretend to be more than he is or can be, and, dissatisfied with the rank assigned him by his maker, will exalt himself into a totally different class of beings. Hence it is, that sensual desires and pleasures are confounded with sinful desires and pleasures ; and man is delivered over to perdition for the former as well as the latter, and the body, as the cause and the instrument of it, is considered as something vile and detrimental to our perfection. No, Sirs, the body, at least in our present state, belongs as essentially to the nature of man,

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as the soul, and the connection of both, makes man to be what he is. As the body, without the soul, would not be a man, but an inanimate, organized body; so the soul, without the body, would not be a man, but a spirit or rather a spiritual being, whose thinking faculty would probably never be brought forth into action without this connection. Thus the christian doctrine, that heavenly wisdom is fully adapted to this idea. It always considers man as man, and treats him as man, as a compounded being, and not as a spirit, confined to this earthly shell during a series of years, for its torment. It enjoins us to govern our body and our sensual desires, but not to despise and spoil the one, or exterminate the others. It gives us to expect, after this life, a new, but a more perfect and more durable mansion, of a different kind from the present.—Neither reason nor scripture, therefore, command us to contemn our body and its welfare;

but we are taught by both to prize and to rejoice in the health and strength of it, as an inestimable present of divine munificence.

But, if it be so great a privilege, so great a present, then is it further our duty, on one hand, to avoid all things that may deprive us of it, or disturb us in the possession or enjoyment of it; and, on the other, to neglect nothing that may maintain or improve it. On this head you do not certainly expect me to give particular prescriptions. Every one must judge for himself, according to the nature of his constitution, passions, business, observations, and experience.

Every person must in this respect pay attention to himself; observe the noxious or wholesome effects, which outward things, as well as the inward changes of his temper, have upon his body and his health; his

his constitution, his faculties, his affairs, his circumstanees, must be compared and contrasted together; and he must then conduct himself by the judgements arising from repeated and careful observations. We must however,—and this is what, as a teacher of religion, I am to enjoin you, and I can, with the greatest assurance do it,—we must study temperance, peace of mind, and satisfaction; we must follow a busy, a laborious, and innocent life, free from all anxious and unchristian cares: we must judge of the good or bad condition of things, of their utility or their hurtfulness, not barely from their present effects, but from their future consequences, what, sooner or later, they may, and probably will produce; we must lay it down as an inviolable law, never, never, for the sake of a short present pleasure, to run the hazard of impairing our health, or of laying the foundation of longer sufferings in future, or of continued infirmity; so

neither must we ever shun any matter merely because it is at present disagreeable and difficult, or lays some restraint upon us; we must, in fine, never forget that our powers are circumscribed, that we cannot exhaust them without detriment and danger, that we must deal economically with them, and that we shall always be able to execute more by them, if we use them for a considerable series of years with prudent moderation, than if, by a too severe and uninterrupted exertion of them, we should shortly render them utterly unserviceable.

Again, we must not, and this is a third duty we have to observe in this respect,—we must not pamper our body, not leave our powers to stagnate for fear of exhausting them; never decline any duty for fear of hurting our health; and, if we do but lead a temperate and regular life, not frequently, not anxiously dwell on all the possible consequences of every, even the smallest and

and most indifferent action of our lives, or on every scarcely perceptible alteration in our body. Least of all must we be swayed by this timidity, or this anxiety, in our moral conduct, in what we owe to God and to our neighbour. No; our duty must be the weightiest of all weighty concerns. This we must punctually endeavour to discharge, as often as it comes in our way, and we have ability for it, even though the consequences of it, in regard to our health, should not always be the best. These consequences we must cheerfully consign to our Father in heaven, who has laid these duties on us, and has given us that power and opportunity to fulfill them, and leave it entirely to his pleasure, how long or how short, and in what measure we may promote his views in the world, and the benefit of our fellow-creatures. Estimable as health and life may be, yet both of them lose their value, when they are purchased by an intentional omission of duty, by a conduct

conduct in opposition to the will of God, and, therefore, at the expence of his good pleasure and a quiet conscience, or are to be preserved by becoming an inactive, useless, or a hurtful member of human society. Even in this respect may it be said, Whosoever will save his life (by the sacrifice of his conscience and his duty) shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake (for the sake of integrity and virtue) shall find it.

This is the rational, the christian concern for our health; a concern that is adequate to the great value of it.

If we would fulfill our duties in general relative to this subject, we must take the doctrine of Jesus to our assistance. It is in an extraordinary manner adapted to facilitate our performance of these duties, and to promote our happiness in this regard.

gard. A few short observations will set this matter beyond a doubt.

The great command of the christian doctrine is love, love towards God and man. It proposes this as the foundation of all our duties; and builds our whole felicity upon it. If then we faithfully apply ourselves to this injunction : if we are sincerely animated by this love ; the health of our body must necessarily gain greatly by it. For envy, hatred, anger, malice, and revenge, are not only ruinous to our spirit, but destructive to our body ; and, in like manner, love, kindness, gentleness, and friendship, are beneficial and clearing to them both. As any base and violent passion, like a sharp poison, excites disorder and tumult in the human frame, and sets not only the thoughts, but likewise the blood and muscles in the most hurtful commotion, and at the same time keeps them in a constant fermentation ; so, on the

the contrary, the gentle and humane dispositions of benevolence and love, produce peace and tranquillity, regularity and harmony in the body as well as the soul ; allow no inordinate emotion to swell into violence, but diffuse life and joy. like a precious ointment, over all the human creature. And how beneficent, how salutary must the love of God likewise be in this respect ! If we meditate upon him with a steady complacency, with delight and filial assurance ; if we constantly enjoy his bounty, and are ever perceiving and feeling fresh testimonies of his fatherly providence ; if we revere his hand in all that happens, as the hand of the wisest and most gracious parent of the universe ; if we never forget that we live under his guardianship and inspection ; if we expect of him only good, and what we are convinced must be the best for us ;—and he who loves God does all this ; how much courage, how much life and joy must this infuse into our frame !

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From how many gnawing cares, from how many anxious troubles, must this secure us ! how many kinds of fear and terror must this preserve us from ! how very much must it alleviate the unavoidable hardships of life ! and who but must perceive what a salutary influence all this must have on the maintenance of our powers, the cheerfulness and health of mankind ?

Christian love inculcates temperance upon us. Not only temperance in regard to eating and drinking, and all other kinds of sensual pleasure ; but moderation also in regard of our desires and endeavours after riches and honour, after importance and power, and all other external advantages. It teaches us not to look upon these things as our supreme felicity, not as necessary and indispensable parts of our happiness, not as the ultimate object of our hopes and wishes : and if we do wish for them and seek them, yet our desires will

will not turn into passions, and our endeavours will not be accompanied by restless anxiety. To whom is it not apparent, how advantageous such a moderation must be even in regard to his health? When any one, with a passionate ardour, strives after riches and honours, or other transitory goods, his strength is soon exhausted; and when he meets with any disappointment, any unexpected obstacle, any triumph of his adversary or competitor, he is on every such occasion thrown out of his temper, his blood becomes feverish and inflamed, or he sinks into a dark and gloomy despondency, which, like a subtle poison, undermines his health. At all this the man of christian moderation is unmoved. He has learnt with the Apostles, in the school of Jesus, to be satisfied with whatever he has; how to suffer want, and how to abound, and withal to be content. The repose of his mind may at times be ruffled, but never destroyed. At times he
may

may feel stronger and inordinate emotions and sensations, but they will never swell into ungovernable and destructive passions. And how many dangers he thus avoids, in regard to his health, and his life !

The christian doctrine excites its followers to chearfulness and joy, and supplies them with the best motives thereto. It frees them from all needless cares, and inspires them with a genial courage. It teaches them to be satisfied with God, with themselves, with the world, with the state in which God hath placed them ; it accustoms them to fix their attention more upon the good than upon the evil that is in the world and amongst mankind, and to enjoy all the good they can whenever and wherever, and with whomsoever, they find it. And this keeps their mental powers clear, and opens to them, on all sides, sources of sentiments as virtuous and innocent as they are full of joy. Now, ask the

the physician how much such a state of mind and spirits contributes to the maintenance or restoration of health and strength. He will tell you, that in most cases, what his whole art has not been able to effect in many years, serenity of mind and cheerfulness of spirit has brought to pass in a few months, or still fewer days.

The christian doctrine gives us, in short, great and certain hopes in regard to futurity. It promises us the assistance and protection of the Almighty in whatever befalls us. It opens to us the fairest prospects in a better and an everduring life after death. It therefore despoils this enemy of its terrors, and tranquillizes us in every misfortune and disaster by the expectation of a felicity, which satisfies all our desires, and amply makes up for all the wants and all the sufferings of this mortal life. And no disposition of the soul, according to the best judges of human nature,

is so adapted to the comfort and support of our faculties and health as hope which is not counteracted or diminished by any anxious doubts, as the cheerful view into futurity incapable of failure or decay.

We must conclude from all that has been said, how comfortable the doctrine of Jesus is. Probably you have never reflected on the vast influence it may have on your bodily health. And yet nothing is more certain. Nay, it renders the whole man, I mean the man whose spirit is animated and governed by it, it renders him wholly happy in body and soul, both in the present and the future world. Oh, let this confirm and strengthen you in esteem and love for that divine doctrine to which you are indebted for it. Make yourselves more and more acquainted with its maxims, which exalt the soul, comfort the heart, and perfect the entire man; follow its precepts more firmly and faithfully, which

all tend to your felicity. Let the love of God and man reside and predominate in you; exercise yourselves in christian moderation; endeavour to kindle and improve in you, by a right way of thinking, by an innocent and virtuous life, a settled and chearful confidence; fix your hopes more strongly on a blessed immortality, and learn to enjoy your future happiness by anticipation: so will you secure the health and strength of your body, as well as promote the health and strength of your soul, remove a thousand dangers and calamities far from you, be less sensible to the unavoidable inconveniences and hardships of life, much more fully enjoy its satisfactions and pleasures, and by every possible means be happy.

E S T I M A T E VI.

THE

V A L U E

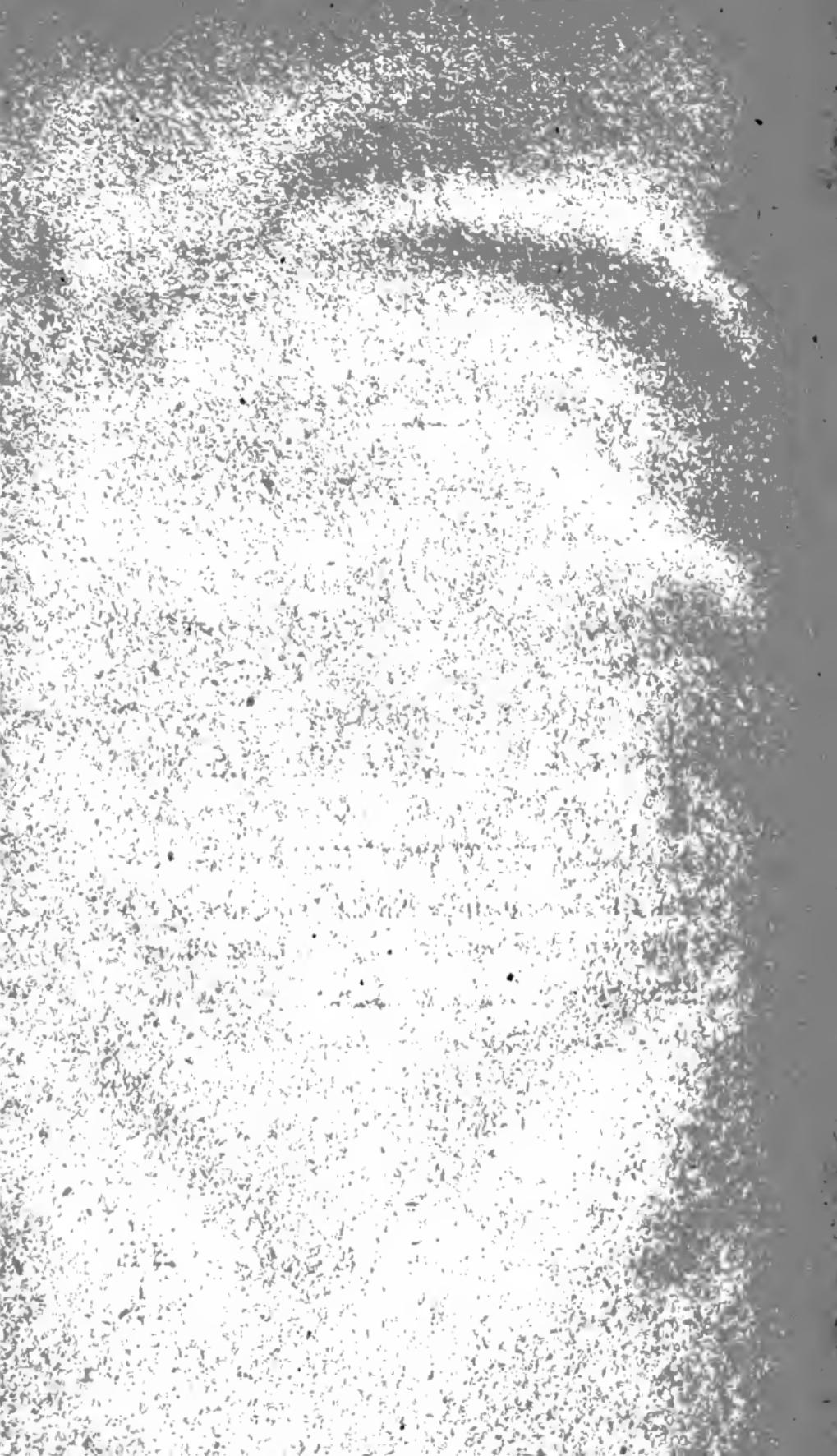
O. F

R I C H E S.

A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the
things which he possesseth. Luke xii. 15.

M 2

THE



T H E

V A L U E.

• F

R I C H E S.

THE judgements that mankind have passed upon the value of riches have been in all times very various; and are even still as different as the views, the cupidity, the circumstances, the wants, and understandings of men. With some, riches are accounted every thing; with others, they are held for nothing. To those they are the most essential, the most excellent good; to these, the most contemptible trash; to those, the means of happiness—nay, happiness itself; to these,

the way to perdition, the source of cares and misery. Some maintain the most strenuous endeavour after riches to be a worthy and an honourable employment; others think they would lessen and degrade themselves by the pursuit of them. The former have the votes of the greatest part of mankind in their favour; while the latter have, indeed, all the philosophers on their side, but very few of the other descriptions of men. They are both, Sirs, in the wrong. The one fort attribute too much to riches; and the other ascribe them too little value. The one turns what only is and can be a means to happiness, into happiness itself; and the other confounds riches with avarice, or with their abuse. Mankind have generally beheld, and they still for the most part behold, riches in the view of possession, not in the use of them, and regulate their judgements accordingly; and, then the severe moralist is undoubtedly more in the right than his opponent.

The value of riches, in this respect, namely, in regard to possession and use, is otherwise and generally better estimated, than it was twenty, or, perhaps, ten years ago. It happens now, comparatively, but seldom, that riches are amassed merely for the sake of amassing, that men strive to be rich, or heap together, only that they may possess much. At present all are inclined to enjoy, all make use of their possessions or their wealth. And in all probability, if the present taste continues, some thirty or forty years hence, very few immensely rich persons will be seen among us. At any rate, the present is the smaller error of the two. Enjoyment is better than possession. A moderate property that a man makes use of, is better than a greater unemployed. But every kind of enjoyment and use is not equally innocent; every one is not worthy; only one can be the right. —And then likewise this judgement of the value of riches, however just it may be,

is not therefore complete. We must consider them, not only in regard to possession and enjoyment, but also to their acquisition; not barely attend to their influence on our outward circumstances, but likewise to their influence on our natural and moral perfection; and then pass judgement on them, not in respect of ourselves, but of society at large.

Our Saviour gives us in the text the true ground for fixing the value of riches. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. That is, No one will be happy merely because he is rich. And yet, such numbers of persons think, perhaps, the generality of mankind, that nothing, absolutely nothing but riches is wanting to make them happy? But Jesus knows us, and all our wants much better than we commonly do ourselves. To be happy, it is necessary that we should have a sound and a right under-

understanding, a tender, pious, and contented heart; and he that possesses such a mind and such a heart, is happy, be he poor, or be he rich; and he to whom these are wanting, can never be happy, even though he abound in all manner of plenty. We will not, however, rest merely in this declaration, however true and important it be, but endeavour to make the matter clearer, by stating the nature and texture of it.

Riches, considered in themselves, without regard to their use and employment, have no value whatever. This is clear to every reflecting person. What would it avail me, who at the utmost can only hope to live seventy or eighty years in the world, if I could heap together and put into safe custody so great a stock of provisions, of raiment of every kind, of the implements of convenience and pleasure, as in the space of two or more centuries I could neither

neither consume, nor use, nor enjoy? Suppose now money, gold and silver, in the stead of those provisions, those cloaths, and those instruments of conveniency and pleasure; will they have acquired a greater value because I have changed them into metal? Is this metal any thing but the mark or token of my pretensions on so much provision, cloaths, and the means of conveniency or pleasure? and is not the token as insignificant to me as the materials themselves, if I do not or cannot use them? Should I not be in the same situation as a man who would have daily an hundred dishes placed before him at table, all prepared and kept for him alone, and yet could only dine on one, and that a little one? or of a man who possessed a hundred convenient and elegant mansions of his own property, and yet could only dwell in one? — This then is a plain proof, that riches, without regard to the use of them, are nothing; deserve not the smallest estimation,

tion, nor are worth the least endeavours to obtain. And on this side must the generality of philosophers, antient and modern, have considered them, when they pronounced them to be only false appearances, and enjoin their disciples to despise them altogether, or to behold them with indifference.

But there is undoubtedly another and a better side, whereon they appear a real blessing, or as the means for procuring us true and solid blessings ; a side on which they deserve the esteem and moderate endeavours of the wise man, and even to the christian are not to be held indifferent. On this side we will now consider them, for fixing their real value. We will see what they are and may be in respect to their possessor, and what in respect to the whole society.

In

In regard to their possessor, riches that have been earned have a greater value than those obtained by inheritance. I pre-suppose that a man has employed the lawful means, without wounding his conscience, or neglecting his higher duties; and that he has procured them not by one or a few fortunate circumstances, but by a regular and continued industry. He that arrives at opulence by this means, cannot but have promoted his real intrinsic spiritual perfection thereby; and in the very obtaining of it has found an actual and lasting benefit thereby, without any regard to the possession or enjoyment of it. For by thus procuring wealth he exercises his mental faculties, excites, improves, and strengthens them. The business he carries on; the plans he forms; the experiments he makes; the connections he enters into with others, and which they maintain with him; the favourable or unfavourable circumstances that arise; the various dispositions

sitions of the persons with whom he has to do; the multifarious revolutions in taste and fashion, sometimes advantageous, and sometimes adverse to him; the sudden and unexpected turns that certain things and businesses take; the dangers which threaten him; the delightful prospects that open to his view; the frequent changes of fortune, and the uncertainty of all human affairs; all these excite observation, reflection, attention, consideration, perspicuity, foresight, courage, fortitude, discernment of character, and knowledge of the world. He must compare a hundred and a hundred things with each other, combine them, and never lose them from his sight. He must lay plans, execute them as time and occasions serve, alter them, contract, extend, and leave them to their course. He must see at once the past, the present, and the future; must now work without visible profit, now purposely suffer loss, that he may thereby assure himself of greater advantage

vantage or gain hereafter; must now retreat, and now stand still; now resolve on the spot, and then deliberate warily; now repair past errors, and then beware of fresh mistakes. And what a multitude of mental exertions does all this require! how much more consistent, acute, and considerate, must he be, how much greater knowledge both of men and things must he have, who has been twenty, thirty, or more years in acquiring riches, and that by hard and toilsome means! I say, how much farther must he be advanced in all these respects, than he would have been, if he had passed all this time in inactivity, or had only earned a bare subsistence by an easy and slight employment! And if he be at the same time a virtuous and pious man, what opportunities, and demonstrations and experiences of sincerity, fidelity, equity, philanthropy, greatness of mind, beneficence, integrity, moderation, constancy, discretion, and confidence in God, must he have had all this time, which, in the opposite situation, he could

could not have met with ! and how much must he be strengthened and confirmed in all these virtues ! Certainly the acquiring of his wealth must have been of great and real value to him ; and if, through some unavoidable accidents, he should come to lose the fruits of his industry, yet will his principal advantages still remain with him ; he will thereby have improved and promoted his spiritual perfection for all future times.

But as the acquiring of riches is an excellent means for the discovery and application of our mental faculties ; so is the temperate use and the prudent employment of riches, once acquired, no less, and thereby also become of real value to the possessor. What advantage, what actual and lasting advantage, will they not secure him, if he employ them in a wise and christian manner ! How many means of instruction, and mental pleasure, may he by their mean

means obtain, which without them he must absolutely forego ! how much time may he employ in the cultivation of his mind, in the augmentation of his knowledge, in the improvement of his taste, in the amendment of his heart, which he was before obliged to consume in hard, dispiriting, and servile labours ! how many instructive conversations with wise and good men may he now enjoy, to whom hitherto he probably could never gain access ! how many conveniences and delights of domestic and social life may he now be blessed with, which hitherto he had no right to pretend to !

And what shall I say of the pleasures of beneficence ? What value have riches to him who knows how to employ them aright ! how much more comfort, and help, and life, and joy, may he spread around him ! how many more tears may he wipe from the eyes of the poor and needy ! how much

much oftener may he be sight to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the orphan, and a support to the widow ! how much more frequently may he supply the place of Jesus, the helper and saviour of men, among his brethren ! how much more substantially may he establish and support useful institutions for the public good, than when he was necessitous himself, or was forced to confine his gains to the supply of his own personal wants ! and when he may do this, and actually does it, and has a heart to feel the charms of doing good, how dear, how inestimable must his riches be to him, as often as he employs them to such noble purposes ! what a source of felicity, of pure human and godlike joy, must they then prove to him, which, while they lay unused, or misemployed in folly and vice, had not the smallest worth !

In short, Sirs, riches have, in another point of view, a very great value in regard

of their possessor, only, however, in regard to the best and worthiest of such as have them. Riches are the means of the most perfect independency, and thereby of freedom of judgement concerning truth and falsehood, right and wrong, honour and shame; the means of a firm and manly behaviour towards high and low, superiors and inferiors; a means of supporting and promoting civil and religious freedom. The less a man is concerned about his own support and advancement in the world, the less his circumstances depend on the approbation and opinions of others; the more he can sacrifice of his own fortune and not feel the loss of it, the more he can spare without becoming poor, or suffering want; so much the less temptation has he to flatter others, to debase himself before the great and mighty by any cringing carriage, implicitly to subscribe to their judgements, or seek to gain their favour by criminal compliance or slavish obedience; so much

much the more freely can he think and determine for himself, and follow his own understanding, his own feelings, and his own desires ; so much the more is he able to support the feeble, to comfort the weary, and to relieve the oppressed ; so much the more forcibly can he take the part of the innocent ; so much more courageously can he withstand the misuse of power, the schemes of artifice, the attacks and the confederacies of the wicked ; so much the less will he scruple to oppose prevailing prejudices, disorders, and follies, and distinguish himself from others by an undiminished love of truth, an unshaken integrity, by a free and impartial estimation of men and things, and by a strict, or, if you please to call it so, an austere course of virtue.—Happy, respectable men, who thus employ your wealth, on whose principles and conduct it has this effect ! To them it is an inestimable gift of Providence ;

vidence ; to them it is assuredly of a great and never-ending value !

But riches unquestionably are of great value in respect of the whole community at large ; that is, it is useful and profitable to society, that what are called the goods of fortune are not to be distributed in equal parts among the members of it, but that some should possess a superfluity of them. The wealth that is not suffered to lie idle, but is employed in acquiring more, or is dispersed abroad and kept in circulation, increases the stock of life and activity among mankind. It promotes industry and labour, and the diligence of the whole society. Here it calls forth mechanical, and there mental powers, to the advancement of the general good. To those it is an incitement and means to the discovery of useful and agreeable things ; while it furnishes an opportunity to these for suitable imitations and improvements of the

materials of conveniency and pleasure already discovered.

The more rich members and men of property any society has, so much the less has the husbandman, the artificer, the artist, the merchant; or the scholar, to fear lest his labour should be in vain; so much the more encouragement have they all to pursue their works with joy, to exert their talents and dexterity to the utmost, and to carry their workmanship and commerce to the highest degree of perfection.

By riches many of the pleasures and conveniences of life are rendered more common; the taste is refined for what is beautiful, solid, and good; the stock of useful knowledge is increased; the roughness of manners is softened; and all these advantages extend themselves gradually farther and wider even among those ranks and classes of men which are not rich, but are

yet capable of greater improvement, and a pleasanter kind of existence.

By riches various nations and countries, some near and some remote, are more closely connected together. They have more fellowship with each other, can mutually impart their goods and produce, the fruits of their industry, the works of art, the light of the sciences, and a thousand things which promote their perfection and happiness; where formerly every nation, every country, every man was confined to what his own ground, his own industry, his own stock of talents and powers, was able to produce. By the circulation of wealth, therefore, every one works for all, and all for every one; and hence the products of the most distant regions, the works and manufactures of the remotest nations, the thoughts and intelligence of the wise of countries separated by the largest continents or seas, are improved a thousand ways,

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disseminated, transplanted, multiplied, embellished, and bring forth on every side, in a greater or less degree, in one manner or another, life, activity, pleasure, joy, knowledge, and the enjoyment of good.

How many difficult, but important and useful matters, in short, could neither be undertaken, nor completed, without the help of riches ! matters, in the undertaking of which a man must venture much, in the prosecution of them must long remain without profit or reward, which must be both begun and prosecuted in the bare hope of a future, far distant, and uncertain utility ! how many good establishments would never have been founded, how many products of nature would never have been wrought up, how many kinds of industry would never have been discovered or pursued, how many branches of commerce would never have been cultivated or rendered flourishing, if society had contained no

wealthy members, who, from benevolence towards their brethren, or even from self-interest and the desire of renown, or only from an uncommon degree of activity, had not undertaken and promoted such things, and employed and devoted considerable sums to the planning and commencing the prosecution and completion of them !

Riches have undeniably a real value, no less in regard of their possessor than of society at large. They are capable of promoting the actual benefit and advancing the happiness of both in various ways. Considered in this manner, they are no false ornaments, but a substantial good. They are by no means to be despised and rejected as such, but merit the esteem and the temperate endeavours of the wise and good.

But what is the consequence, Sirs, of this statement of riches, if we reckon them for exactly what they are ?

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It follows from these principles, that riches, to them who barely possess them, without using them, or without using them aright, have no value whatever—they are neither profitable nor honourable to them. Neither their understanding nor their heart is the better for them; they are neither more perfect, nor more happy. Whatever means we may have in our power, so long as they are not employed to that purpose, are the same to us as if we had them not. Such a man's wealth, therefore, gives him no real pre-eminence; and if, notwithstanding, he applauds himself for it, and boasts of it, he suffers himself to be deceived by a vain appearance, and boasts that he, according to his circumstances, might and should be more enlightened, better, and happier, than he really is.

It follows farther, that wealth, when once earned or otherwise obtained, procures the greatest advantages, at least to its wise

wise and worthy possessor, and thence to the whole society wherein he lives ; that, therefore, its advantage consists more in the honour of being the acquirer, the collector, the manager, the keeper, and the distributor of them, than in their exclusive enjoyment. For the rich man can only enjoy the least part of what he has. He must always, whether he will or no, allow others to enjoy the greatest ; nay, abating only his unreasonable and hurtful satisfactions, he can enjoy nothing, but what others in some way or other must profit by. He therefore, generally speaking, is not deserving of envy, nor to be reckoned a noxious member of society. Esteem and thanks are much rather due to him, for the benefits he communicates to others ; for the provision and assistance they generally receive from him in penury and want.

It follows, thirdly, that a moderate income, which is well earned and properly employed, is of much greater value, as well to the man that has it, as to the society in which he lives, than the greatest possessions, which are not so acquired, or so employed. What, in the hands of sloth, ignorance, folly, gluttony, and luxury, fades, corrupts, perverts, empoisons, and kills ; in the hands of wisdom, virtue, industry, and philanthropy, multiplies, improves, and ennobles ! how much life, and activity, and joy, does it not produce ! Let not then the man of moderate fortune complain that he is not rich ; let him not delay the good employment of what he has till he become so. Let him do at present all that his means allow him to do, and do it with prudence and perseverance ; and he will thus be as useful as if he were actually rich, and probably more so.

Lastly,

Lastly, it follows, from what has been observed of the value of riches, that we are not to honour the rich man, because he is rich, but only as he has acquired and employs his riches in a laudable manner.

None, therefore, should reverence the rich man merely because he has inherited riches, till he renders himself worthy of his fortune by a proper employment of it. And if he does not, let him be treated, not only in our private estimation, but in our outward behaviour, and in our public judgments as inferior to an honest day-labourer, or any poor person who is not poor by his vices; and thus let him perceive that society is justly scandalized, at seeing a member of it receiving so much, and distributing so little, requiring so much service, and performing hardly any, and puffing himself up with pretensions, while he is indebted, only to chance, or rather to Providence, for what he has, and which that

Providence

Providence would never have bestowed upon him, if wealth were intrinsically important or honourable, or if it were always the token and the reward of merit.

None can respect that rich man, who, with all the means and opportunities for cultivating his understanding and ameliorating his heart to the capacity of elevated pleasures, remains unimproved, ignorant, vicious, full of low desires, and knows no other merit, no greater joy, than what his possessions give him, and the heaping of treasure upon treasure !

None can reverence the rich man who is rich only to himself, who is deaf to the voice of poverty and woe ; and whose heart is shut to compassion, and his hand to charity !

None can esteem the rich man who is proud of his riches, who reckons himself
on

on that account better than his poor brethren; and who proportions his consideration and regard to others according to the degree of their greater or smaller income!

In short, none can reverence riches in the hands of the fool, the unjust, the haughty, the epicure, the hard-hearted, and the misanthropist! For riches can neither change the nature of folly, nor of injustice, nor pride, nor hardness of heart, nor inhumanity. And though they may conceal these vices and defects at times, it is only from the view of weak and silly men, who know not how to discern between semblance and reality, and suffer themselves to be cheated by every imposture.

But every one, Sirs, every one must esteem the man, who, by his understanding, his industry, his activity, and his prudence, by a faithful and conscientious employment

ployment of his gifts and faculties, is become rich !

All men respect the rich man who makes a good and generous use of his riches, who employs them in promoting and encouraging the industry of his fellow citizens, opens branches of useful commerce, encourages arts and sciences, supports good institutions, rewards beneficial discoveries, and publishes them for the general advantage, and at the same time, though in the midst of opulence, lives within the bounds of moderation and reason, and never loses sight of his higher destination !

In short, all men respect the rich man who strives to be rich in good works, in works of beneficence and mercy, who is rich more for others than for himself, who heartily gives and heartily helps ; who cannot think himself rich but when he is giving and helping ; who finds his joy and

and bliss in it ; and, in so doing, like his heavenly Father, God, is never discouraged or weary ! Yes, every man loves and reveres him, as the friend and benefactor of his brethren, as the substitute of Jesus, as the image of God !

E S T I M A T E VII.

T H E

V A L U E

O F

H O N O U R.

Render therefore to all their dues—honour to
whom honour.

Rom. xiii. 7.

VOL. I.

O

THE

W. G. K. O. H.

et hanc etiam sicut plures videntur
in aliis locis.

THE

V A L U E

OF

HONOUR.

EMULATION, Sirs, is natural to all men; and nothing but the supreme degree of insensibility, of levity, or of vice, can render us wholly indifferent to honour and shame. Indeed this sentiment is not equally active and strong in all. The degree of its strength and activity in each person is frequently determined by his natural disposition, his education, his manner of life, his company, his connections, and other peculiar circumstances; but in none is it totally idle or inactive. It must

be confessed that this sentiment is the cause of much harm to mankind—is the parent of many follies, many vices, and much misery. But it likewise occasions no less, it causes far more good, and is the fertile source of much wisdom, many virtues, and much happiness. All depends upon the proper direction of it, upon the choice of its objects, and its being guided in its aims by reason and religion.

If we would have this to be the case with us, we must acquire a right conception of honour, and the value of it, of the grounds whereon it is desirable ; and on these several articles the generality of men fall into gross mistakes. Honour, no less than wealth, has an outward glare, a certain gloss, that plays round its real and essential condition. Dazzled or blinded by this, few men think of examining and discovering what may lie hid behind it. Hence such different, such opposite judgments

ments are passed on the value of honour, as well as of wealth. Hence the excessive esteem and admiration of it by some, and the absolute contempt of it by others. Hence the ardent, unabated endeavours of some after every thing that is called honour, and the careless, and even derisive indifference of others towards it. Hence, in short, that manifest variance, or that seeming contradiction between the maxims of the world, and those of religion and philosophy; mere error, prejudice, confusion, and extravagance, arising from a deficiency of reflection and consideration. Happy shall I think myself, if by my present attempt I can contribute any thing towards lesseng these faults and defects of the human understanding and heart; if I can lay before you any impartial and satisfactory observations on this matter, for settling your judgements upon it.

My design is, to give you clear and right notions of the value of honour. Afford me then your customary seriousness and attention.

When the apostle exhorts the christians at Rome to give to all their dues, honour to whom honour is due, he plainly shews, that honour is not in opposition to christianity; that it has a certain value, is due to certain persons, and that to testify it is a duty incumbent on us. On the same principle, he admonishes the christians, on other occasions, to prefer one another in honour; that they should all endeavour after the honour that proceeds from good actions.—Christianity condemns neither honour nor the striving to obtain it; but requires of its confessors, in this article, likewise temperance and moderation, to direct their ambition towards the most important and most excellent objects, and to look upon honour not as an end, but only

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as a means.—And when our Saviour forbids his disciples the allowing of themselves to be called master and rabbi, and tells them that the greatest among them shall be as the least, and the chief of them as the servant of all ; when he thus appears utterly to discard all honour, every mark of distinction, and every token of reverence ; yet the attentive reader of these precepts will easily perceive that his design in giving them was no other than to free his disciples from the idle expectation of eminent dignities and conspicuous stations in the kingdom of the Messiah ; and to shew them that they were not to be guided by a party-spirit, and to erect themselves into chiefs among mankind ; but that they were to ascribe all to him, as the sole chieftain and lord of his congregation. The thing itself then is innocent and good, even according to the doctrine of christianity ; and all we have to do is

so to regard and so to use it as is becoming the true nature and condition of it.

By honour, we are to understand all tokens of consideration shewn us by society in preference to others ; all outward precedence it grants or allows us, whether it consists in dominion and power, or in rank and titles, or in posts and dignities, or in an exemption from certain hardships and restraints, or in other privileges of the like kind. Now, for rightly adjusting the worth of these things, we must in the first place discriminate between hereditary honours, and such as are acquired.

Hereditary honours, pre-éminences derived to us from our parents and ancestors, have no solid intrinsic value on our account, and bear the name of honours in regard to us in but a very improper signification. This will immediately be perceived by any one that is not blinded by the glare of these

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pre-eminent. For, what advantage is it to me, that my forefathers, in antient or in modern times, by mental abilities, by virtues, by praise-worthy deeds, or by bodily strength, have distinguished themselves from others; or that it happened to them probably by some fortunate accident, probably by some service they performed, though slight in itself, yet done in favourable circumstances, and which they perhaps never intended; probably even by base and low intrigues, by the arts of flattery; procured the good-will of some superior, or bought a title and precedence with money? what have I to do in all that; I, who then had no existence; I, who probably, were I in their situation, would not, or could not have done as my forefathers did? have I, therefore, the smallest merit in it? am I become the better, or the more honourable, because some of my ancestors raised themselves above their contemporaries by being real heroes, or savage warriors,

warriors, or highway robbers, or court sycophants ; that they acquired distinctions either by strict goodness, or by downright wickedness, or by some accidental event ? Probably, it is true, probably I may have had the happiness of a better education on this account. But is a good education, then, a merit in me, for which I am to be honoured by others ? is it not a benefaction, for which I stand indebted to others, and which none can reckon meritorious in me, till I have shewn the good uses I make of it ?

Hereditary honours and distinctions, or precedencies by birth and pre-eminencies by descent, are then only so far valuable, as they incite me to render myself worthy of them, and to obtain more rewards of society by good, generous, and useful actions ; so much the more cautiously to avoid every thing unworthy and shameful ; and to raise myself as much above others by my

my sentiments and behaviour as I am in rank and titles. He on whom it has not this influence, he who does the reverse, if he has otherwise a sound understanding, and is capable of reflection, must feel himself ashamed as often as he thinks upon his outward distinction; it must be burdensome to him, like a load of debt which he has not discharged. He must, in those moments of self-investigation and self-abhorrence, wish that he had been born in an humbler station! Reflect on this particularly, ye youths who bear the style of honourable! if ye be not honourably minded and honourably mannered, no wise, no intelligent man, will reverence you merely on account of your name; and every base, every degrading action you commit, will load you with tenfold shame!

Acquired, rightly acquired honour, on the other hand, is a real honour, and has a great

a great value, both in regard to the possessor, and to the whole society.

In regard to the possessor, its value consists in the manner by which it is obtained, by which it is supported, and how it is used or applied. In all these respects it promotes his real spiritual perfection.

The duly acquiring of honour therefore principally does this; the acquiring of honour, not the honour that is acquired by purchase, by flattery, by presumption, or impudence; but is grounded on superior talents, on good and glorious actions, on real benefits done to society. He that acquires honour in this manner, must thereby become better and more perfect. For, what will it not generally demand to advance oneself before the rest of mankind, to get distinguished from them, to surpass them, to excell them in a remarkable, striking, and universally approved manner!

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what does it not require to reach a certain mark which we have proposed, frequently very distant, and often not clearly discernible ; to be getting constantly nearer it, and to pursue it with constancy till it be attained ! how many impediments have we not to get over, how many obstacles to avoid, and how many competitors to surpass, how difficult, how complicated, how prolix is frequently the matter itself by which this honour is to be acquired ! I mean the arts and sciences, military service, civil or mercantile affairs, wherein we strive to be distinguished ! and how much harder do all these things become by circumstances not dependent on ourselves, by the poverty wherein we may be born, by the little instruction we have probably had in our younger years, by the opposition all men have to encounter, by the jealousies and envy we excite, by the unavoidable mistakes we commit ! what struggles, what various exertions of our mental

mental faculties does it not require, to force a passage through all these difficulties, to combat and conquer them all ! But is not this the way that leads to higher perfection, to wisdom, and to virtue ?

No more, Sirs, can we worthily maintain our honour so acquired without thereby promoting our perfection. Would we secure the prize after which we strive, from being ravished from us ? Then we must never stand idle—much less retreat—we must constantly stretch forwards, always labour to make farther advances in what is beautiful and praise-worthy. Wise, good, and useful actions, which are not followed by similar actions, merits which are not augmented by new ones, soon sink into forgetfulness, soon become a burden to us, then render us less respectable, and at length cast us into contempt. What does it not require for this respected man to preserve the good opinion, the esteem, and

the confidence of society ; if he would not have them repent the precedence they have allowed him, the honour they have shewn him ! what circumspection in all his actions, even the least of them ! what circumspection and prudence in whatever he does, and whatever he declines ! what sacrifices of his conveniences, his pleasures, and his profits ! what practice of the virtues ! what an active and busy life, what indefatigable endeavours, does it not demand after higher perfection.

In short, we cannot possess and enjoy honour in a noble manner, without thereby becoming better, happier, and more useful to mankind. What a mighty incitement to the faithful discharge of our duty, to the most unshaken integrity, must it be to such a one who feels its value and the obligations it lays him under ! how much easier is it in general for men to act up-rightly and justly, generously and nobly,

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in the light of an universal esteem, by the splendor of renown, than when they have to act in obscurity, without witnesses, without spectators, and without judges !

Again, honour procures us admission to the wisest and the best of men ; it furnishes us with the opportunity for procuring us their esteem, their confidence, and their friendship. And how much may we then learn of them, how much strengthen our spirit, how warm our heart, and how much happiness enjoy in their conversation !

By honour and esteem we far more readily find help and encouragement in our greatest and hardest undertakings, and more surely complete our designs, than when we are unhonoured and unknown. Mankind have already a good opinion of us, have great confidence in our understanding and our heart, believe our intentions to be honest beforehand, and shew them-

themselves ready to withstand the oppositions we meet with, and to remove the impediments that lie in our way. We may, therefore, undertake greater matters, operate farther and wider, have more influence on others, and thereby perform and promote more good. Our opinions meet with greater approbation; our advice is more readily taken; will be more willingly supported; and will unite far more heads and hands in their execution. Oh what is there that a man, who stands in great and merited esteem, cannot undertake for the good of his brethren! What may not a man possessed of eminent precedence, of high rank, invested with an exalted charge, and is wise and virtuous withal, what may he not perform for their advantage! what a benefactor to the present and to many future generations may he be! and what a pure and godlike pleasure must he procure himself in such a use of his honour! how vastly must he

thereby display his fitness for still higher dignity, for still greater activity in a better world !

But, if honour and pre-eminence, rightly acquired, worthily maintained, and duly employed, have a certain value in regard of their possessor ; they assuredly have as great, and even still greater, in respect of the whole society. They promote its advantage in various ways.

It is a good thing in general, when there are certain persons in it who may serve as an example to others, in a society, and indeed among all classes and orders of men ; and this they are able the better to do, when they stand higher than others, when they may be distinguished from others by their outward characters, when they are known and respected by every man throughout their sphere of action, when every one's eyes are directed towards them, when what-

whatever they say and do quickly comes to every man's knowledge. The judgement, the approbation, the testimony, the example of one who stands high in the esteem and the deserved respect of the society, has indisputably far more weight, far more influence and efficacy, than the judgement, the approbation, the testimony, and the example of another, however wise and virtuous, who lives in obscurity, and is lost in the multitude. Indeed, if all men had good principles, and acted upon them, if they all were animated by the spirit of religion, they would not be in need of this comparatively feeble support. But since, in the present situation of things, this is not to be expected, it is of infinite service to the world, that the light which enlightens respectable persons, the radiance they spread around, the esteem that is paid them by all, should, in some degree, supply the place of those principles, those nobler motives.

Honour rightly acquired, and worthily maintained, is, farther, a powerful incentive to others to strive after honour by the same laudable means. All men cannot, perhaps only a few can, dispense with these incitements to eminently good and great enterprises, at least, in the beginning. First, must the prize, the crown, that sparkles at the end of their course, awaken them from their sloth, call them to commence the glorious career, and help them to surmount the first obstacles in it. By degrees their satisfactions grow purer, and give place to nobler views and more generous motives. They find, that truth, virtue, integrity, public utility, are in themselves worthy and excellent things; they employ themselves wholly in them, pursue their progress, strait forward, undismayed, without seeing farther on it, or perceiving a more exalted and grander mark beyond it; do all that is excellent and of good report, without thinking on the

the praise and glory that is to follow ; do, from a hearty love towards God and man, what they at first performed out of cupidity and ambition : and all this they probably would not have done, their capacities and abilities would not have been excited, at least to this degree ; if they had not been kindled by the view of more honourable, more respectable persons, or by the report of their deeds, and by the desire to do like them or to go beyond them ; if the first spark of this active life, this greater utility, these nobler sentiments, these endeavours after extension and activity which lay smouldering in their breasts, had not been thus blown up into a flame. And, if this were not the case, how many noble powers would probably never have been set in motion, how many seeds of good actions would never have come to maturity, how many useful labours would never have been undertaken !

Honour, rightly acquired, and worthily maintained, receives a great value in regard of the whole community, as by means of it many very important matters are brought to effect thereby, which otherwise would not be, or far seldomer, and not without the greatest labour and perseverance. Without the influence of honour, how could the contradictory opinions, and the opposite means and aims of the great multitude of mankind, be brought into unison, and made to tend to one and the same object? how will any patriotic and arduous undertaking be maturely brought forth, wisely stated, and firmly executed? whose counsel would be hearkened to in times of scarcity or distress? who could acquire the confidence needful in times of danger? who could, in such circumstances, inspire the ignorant, the feeble, the timid, and the narrow-minded, the greatest part of society, with courage and obedience, when a man cannot divulge the reasons for what he does

does and what he expects, or, if he can, cannot make them understood? In short, how can the prince, the magistrate, the judge, the teacher, the father of a family, the chieftain, the inspector, discharge the duties of his office or his calling with good effect, unless the honour he enjoys, the esteem wherein he stands, gives a peculiar weight to all he says and does, to whatever he commands, and advises, and desires?

It is therefore plainly apparent, that the honour which is duly obtained and properly employed, has a true and lasting value, both in regard of its possessor, and of society at large, inasmuch as it furthers and promotes the perfection and happiness of both.—Let me now conclude, with pointing out to you a few short rules of conduct in respect to your opinion of honour, and your endeavours after it.

First, learn to distinguish between true and false, personal and borrowed honour; prize each according to its worth, but never confound them. All titles, rank, and pre-eminence, which is obtained by birth, derived from our ancestors, and comes to us by descent, is borrowed and accidental honour; this bespeaks no merit, but is an obligation and incitement to acquire merit, and thereby to obtain a property in that precedence.

All honour acquired by undue and debasing means, which is founded on artifice, on treachery, on oppression, or extortion, or on mere impudence, or base and unrighteous acts of any kind; all honour that is abused to the purposes of pride and arrogance, to the overthrowing or diminishing of human and civil liberty, to the enforcing of unlawful purposes; all honour that is sought for by sinister or oblique

ways, by pomp and luxury; is false honour—it is real disgrace.

Let no man, therefore, debase himself by testifying his reverence towards him who only shines by borrowed honour, which is only due to the man of real merit, who has procured it to himself, or has rendered himself worthy of it! Let no man affront himself so far as to foster the pride of the wretched creature who is proud of surreptitious honour, or afford the least respect to vice, though invested with the richest robe of dignity ! but let every man be zealous to testify honour to whom honour is due ; let every man confess and respect, and revere whatever he perceives of good, and useful, and honourable in his brethren, let their station be what it may ! this is the duty of the man, the duty of the citizen, the duty of the christian !

Let not your emulation degenerate into ambition. The former is allowable, is natural, and the germ of virtue, the other is a criminal and shameful vice, a corrupt passion, and the death of all real virtue. So soon as a man makes honour the ultimate, the highest aim of his pursuits; so soon as he resolves at any rate to distinguish himself from others, to force himself above them, to gain reverence, authority, and power, approbation and applause, let it cost what it will; he immediately runs the risk of losing the path to real honour, and to entangle himself in the labyrinth of cunning and falsehood—will be capable of every vice, of every wicked deed, even the lowest and most disgraceful actions, if by their means he can but further his designs. Beware of this tyrannical passion! it is a pestilence in human society, and always, whether sooner or later, rewards its votaries with shame and misery!

Give

Give your emulation the best, the noblest direction. Regard the privileges of mind and heart, as superior to all the privileges of rank and station, wisdom and virtue, to all titles and dignities, the silent acts of philanthropy and beneficence to all noisy but less useful deeds!

Strive not so much after the esteem of the multitude, as after that of the wisest and best among mankind. Let the approbation of one wise, one virtuous, one real christian, be of more value to you than the applause of thousands, whose judgement depends on accident and humour!

Go still farther; purify and exalt your emulation yet more. Seek not honour from men, but aim at the honour which only God can give. The approbation of the Omniscient and Omnipresent, who seeth in secret—seeth what is good as well as what is bad, and what is bad as well as what

what is good, the will as well as the deed, the motive as well as the effect—to procure his approbation, to become ever more capable and more deserving of it, let this, let this be the ultimate aim of your emulation !

Strive not so much after honour, as after that which conduces to honour, that which is truly honourable ! not after praise, but what is praise-worthy ! not after approbation and applause ! From him who seeks honour with anxiety, from him it commonly flies. He who does that which is attended by honour, and does it in honest simplicity of heart, because it is right and good, he will, for the most part, find honour and approbation, even though he did not seek it. Restless, anxious lust of honour, a nice and delicate adaptation of every word, every step, every action to the severest rules of honour, cannot by any means consist with the character of a truly great

great and noble soul, with a truly christian-minded christian. The noble soul, the great man, the real christian, are so employed in effectual service, in better and more perfect practice of what is fair, and great, and christian—are ever seeing before them still greater and weightier things to do,—are so pre-occupied with truth, and virtue, and the public benefit, so penetrated with the love of God, and of their brethren, that they forget themselves, and find sufficient impulse and reward in righteousness and beneficence, and prize not the honour they receive from men as their end and aim, but at most as instruments and means. This, Sirs, is true greatness, true nobility of spirit, the ground and fitness for ever-during honour !

Pursue the path of duty and honour, endeavour to make the best, the most beneficial use of your gifts and faculties, and though you should still have no outward

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distinctions, and your merits should be un-
acknowledged by society : oh, let not this
lead you into mistake, confidently pursue
the path you have begun ; the end of it
will bring you to greater perfection and
bliss. Complain not of injustice and in-
gratitude, if unfavourable and adverse cir-
cumstances ravish from you the honour you
have deserved. It cannot constantly be
conferred on merit. Its judges, its dis-
tributers, are men, fallible, mistaking,
passionate men ! Numbers are likewise fre-
quently aiming at the same mark with you,
come to the full as near, and yet only one
can gain the prize. But let this serve you
as a caution, not to make honour your ul-
timate scope, or you may easily miss of it
without your fault. Only the approbation
of our conscience, the approbation of God,
is what no man can deprive us of without
our fault. After these let us strive, and
we shall never labour in vain, nor fail in
our attempt.

Lastly,

Lastly, herein conduct yourselves, as christians, by the example of Christ; let him be your model. He sought not honour from men; reckon that which glitters and glares in your eyes as of little import: he never boasted of his pre-eminence; he suffered neither praise nor blame to turn him aside from the path of rectitude and truth; but all that was honourable and good, that did he, and that without remission. All his discourses, all his actions, were conformable to his dignity; all tended to the promotion of human felicity. He neither said nor did any thing that could weaken his influence or enervate his doctrine, or frustrate his benevolent labours. The good pleasure of his heavenly Father, he prized above all things, and strove with unabated ardour after the honour of being the saviour, the deliverer of many, of all men. And in this way he attained to the highest glory, was exalted high above all, and received a dignity above all dignities;

nities; to whom all mankind now bow and obey, and acknowledge him for their Lord. Him, Sirs, him let us follow, become constantly more like him in sentiments and actions. The way which he has trod before us is the way that leads to the highest honour!

E S T I M A T E VIII.

T H E

V A L U E

O F

SENSUAL PLEASURE.

Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.

1 Tim. iv. 4.

VOL. I.

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V A L U E

OF THE

PLEASURES OF SENSE.

IN the two preceding discourses I have spoken of the value of riches, and of the value of honour. To-day I shall address you on the value of pleasure; and particularly of what is called sensual pleasure. Falsely and partially as men are apt to judge of the value of riches and honour, so falsely and partially do they deem of the value of sensual pleasures. But too frequently have they been absolutely condemned as unworthy of rational and immortal beings, of christians called to the

vocation of virtue ; and for this condemnation of them, uniform appeals have been made to religion and christianity. And how lamentably have both religion and christianity been by this means discredited in the minds of many ! what numbers have been terrified from the love and practice of them ! how often have these best friends and comforters of man been shewn us under a gloomy and joyless aspect ! how much have religion and christianity been misrepresented and injured thereby ! what abuse of their most sacred names ! how far are they from interdicting us any innocent pleasures, any harmless joys of whatever kind, and from rendering the draught of life more bitter and unpleasant than it is by the institution and order which God hath established in nature ! how far, I say, are they from this ; they, who have nothing in view but to lighten the load of life, and to inspire us with a firm and cheerful courage, and to make us know and feel the good-

goodness of our heavenly Father, in all that surrounds and befalls us; and to render us, not only in the future, but likewise in the present world, as happy as it is possible for us to be!

No; as religion and christianity neither forbids us from striving to acquire riches by lawful means, or from endeavouring after true honour by the way of wisdom and virtue; so neither do they forbid us to yield our bodily organs to the agreeable impressions made upon them by external objects, and therefore to enjoy sensual pleasures. Indeed they warn us not to hurt ourselves and others by their improper use, not to be immoderate in their enjoyment, and not to indulge an excessive love towards them. But even herein they provide for our pleasures, for the higher enjoyment of them, for their longer duration, for their accommodation with the pleasures of the mind and heart, of which we are as

susceptible as of those, and which are still more desirable. We must only, according to their prescriptions, so use the world, and the good things thereof, as not abusing them. We must only take heed that we do not leave God without our witness that he sends us so much good from heaven, and fills our hearts with food and gladness, not suffer them to bear us from him, but to lead and bring us nearer to him. We may enjoy, without reserve, all that God has made, and whatever he has allowed us by his constitution of the world, for our enjoyment, but all with prayer and thanksgiving for a sensibility to the kindness of our supreme benefactor, and thus to sanctify them to us. Accordingly the apostle explains himself on this matter in his letter to Timothy. Every creature of God, says he, every thing that God has created, every pleasure of which he has made us capable, is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgivlng ; we may enjoy

enjoy them all without sin, if the enjoyment does not make us forget our God, and withdraw our hearts from him: For making this appear undeniable, we will now endeavour to investigate the matter more closely, and so get a complete conception of it. And in this design we shall

First make a few observations on pleasure in general, and the various kinds of it;

Then, state the value of sensual pleasures in particular; and

Lastly, give some rules for our conduct in relation to it. Every pleasure, even sensual pleasure, has in and of itself, something good. In this respect it is essentially different from riches and honour. They receive their whole value from the use a man makes of them, from the effects they produce, from the good their possessor performs by their means. But pleasure is of

itself, without regard to effects and consequences, agreeable and good; an agreeable sensation, an agreeable display of our powers, an agreeable sentiment of our existence, and of our present situation.

It must however be confessed, that every pleasure is not desirable in like manner; but so neither is every real good absolutely so, and in the same degree. The possession of one good often militates with the possession of another; the enjoyment of one pleasure may often not consist with the enjoyment of another. One pleasure is always purer, nobler, greater than another; one pleasure even remains a pleasure in its consequences; another soon ceases to be a pleasure, and changes into pain or disgust. There are pleasures which are bought much too dear, and the trouble a man must bestow upon them is not repaid him, because they almost immediately cease to be pleasures; there are others which are worth every

every toil, every preparation, every endeavour, and always perform more than they promise. We must therefore chuse from among our pleasures ; they cannot all be alike enjoyed, they may not all be enjoyed at any time ; many must be denied and dismissed, that we may be capable and partakers of others. Every pleasure is good, is desirable ; but each in its proper time, in its due degree, according to its kind. Even the meanest, the lowest sort of them have the preference, at certain times and in certain places, to the noblest and the most exalted. Thus we may, nay we must not unfrequently prefer the satisfaction of a degrading animal appetite, or the rest and inactivity necessary to the support of our frail body, to the purest and sublimest joys of devotion. In general, they are all either ennobled or debased, either weakened or invigorated, according to the disposition wherein the man enjoys them,

them, the views he has therein, and the use to which he turns them.

Farther, every pleasure, even what are called sensual pleasures, is properly a spiritual pleasure : that is, our spirit has the sentiment, the consciousness of the agreeable alteration externally produced in the body, or in the visible world, as well as the agreeable representations, which, independent on all externals, we excite and prosecute in ourselves. Pleasure and displeasure, delight and disgust, are no more than different situations of our mind, different ways wherein we feel our existence and our disposition in regard to the fore-mentioned things, whether the ground and the occasions of them be within or without us.

We distinguish them only in regard to the means whereby these revolutions and representations exist in us ; or in regard to
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the sources from whence we draw these agreeable sensations.

Whether it be our organs of sense which procure them to us; whether beautiful images received by the eyes, melodious sounds by the ear, delightful smells by the nostrils, delicious impressions by means of the palate and tongue, agreeable thrilling emotions and sensations, which by sensibility reach the soul; they are all called sensual pleasures, though it is always our spirit that has and enjoys them. They may even sometimes in a purer, higher, nay, in the peculiar signification of the word become spiritual; when, by the consideration and sentiment of the true, the beautiful, and the good in nature, we are thence led to the still more elevated consideration and adoration of the great artificer and his goodness. Or, more especially, when we reflect thereupon, compare them together, and combine them with

with former sentiments and representations, draw conclusions from them, and proceed from particulars and individuals to generals and universals, and at length, as far as our imagination allows, get a conception of the whole, and thus use and exercise all our mental faculty, and this without laborious exertions, and with beneficial effects.

And also herein consists spiritual pleasure in the strictest sense of the term, and in opposition to such as are properly called sensual. We name them spiritual, inasmuch as they do not consist in present impressions made on our sensual organs, but chiefly, or entirely in the sole operation of our spirit, and are a fruit of its reflections, its considerations and researches—relate more to invisible than to visible things, and are grounded on the knowledge and contemplation of truth, on the sensations of moral beauty and harmony, on the sentiment

ment of our personal, inward, and ever-increasing perfection, on adoration of God, on joy in him, and a cheerful prospect of futurity.

These, the more spiritual, or the absolutely spiritual pleasures, have undoubtedly, of all others, the greatest value. They are of their own nature inexhaustible. No man can ever enjoy all the pleasures of this kind of which he is capable; and neither can he so fully enjoy as that he may not more fully enjoy them. Here one pleasure is continually springing out of another; and even that which we have the most frequently enjoyed never loses of its value thereby, will never be tasteless, is continually acquiring new charms and ever-fresh delights, constantly shews itself in new directions, and in new combinations of pleasure.—The materials of these pleasures are as immense as the kingdom of truth, as unbounded as the world, and as infinite as divine perfection.—These plea-

asures are likewise far more durable than all others. They do not vanish with the light of the day; they do not disappear with the outward aspect of things, do not turn to corruption with our bodies in the grave. They remain with us as long as we remain. They abide by us under all the changes and revolutions of our present and future condition. They compensate the deficiencies of the whole visible world; they accompany us in the darkness of the night, in the absence of all society, in the loneliness of the grave.—On this very account are they likewise pleasures which bring us nearer to the end for which we were made. They transplant us from the class of merely animal, to that of spiritual beings. They connect themselves immediately with the pleasures we expect in a better life, render us fitter for the enjoyment of them, and become the foundation of them, as they are but a continuance of these.

But,

But, certain as all this is, Sirs, so certain it is likewise, that sensual pleasures have nevertheless their value, that we are not by any means to despise and refuse them, that we are much rather to prize, to seek, and to enjoy them.—And wherein then peculiarly consists the value of sensual pleasures?

That it consists in an agreeable sensation, in a pleasant mode of existence, and thereby, like every other pleasure, has an intrinsic value, inseparable from the enjoyment of it, is, what we have already remarked, and is not capable of any farther definition, as a matter entirely belonging to the province of sentiment and experience. But when it is innocent and temperate, it receives a still greater value by the good consequences it produces, by its effects on our whole outward state.

The

The moderate and cheerful enjoyment of sensual pleasures supports our life, and promotes our health. By giving a stronger stimulus to the solids, and a quicker circulation to the fluid part of our body; by the diversity of movements occasioned thereby; by the cessation of all laborious and fatiguing exertions, either of the particular nerves devoted to fixed and earnest reflection, or of the vessels and muscles adapted to hard mechanical labour; by the relaxation of nerves too strongly moved; and the moderate employment of the fibres that have lain too long inactive; by giving us a brighter view of objects, by the incitement and enjoyment of agreeable sensations: by all these means the slighter disorders of the body are removed, their farther progress stopped, the order, harmony, and equipoise of its various parts and their capacities are restored, and new life and new powers inspired into the whole machine. And this is frequently better effected

effected by walking abroad, recreating journeys, company, conversation, diversions, dancing, festivities, and the like, than by merely mental pleasures; under which our bodies would sink, at least in their present state, if they were not relieved by such restoratives, as soon as under the oppression of too full a meal.

But if our bodies stand in need of such refreshments and recreations, our spirit no less requires and finds them in the innocent and moderate enjoyment of sensual pleasures. Its attention is thereby directed to other matters less serious and austere. Its faculties are at the same time slackened in their tension, expand themselves with greater freedom; are no longer confined to the prosecution of one particular design; employ themselves on new ones, more lightly ranges over a variety of objects and sentiments, or roves more easily from one to another, without remaining on any so

long as to feel fatigue. And thus our spirit acquires new life, new strength, new capacities to its powers; when our duty and vocation, and our thirst after higher perfection, demand them, fresh vigour for new exertions, pursued with delight, and attended by good effects.

Innocent sensual pleasures contribute likewise to the more closely connecting mankind with each other, and the improvement of social life. Social pleasure draws all within the sphere of its operation to it; brings every part of it nearer together. All mutually give and receive, interchangeably bestow and enjoy; every man contributes more or less to the pleasures of the rest; and this must render them all sensible of their reciprocal dependency, and their mutual wants, and thereby make them more valuable and more dear to each other.

Innocent

Innocent sensual pleasure, and the social enjoyment of it; also mitigates all asperity in the judgements and manners of men; makes men perceive more goodness, more pleasant and amiable qualities in each other; gives even virtue a brighter aspect, to prudence a more cheerful mien, thus gains more proselytes to both; and procures them both a larger and more unimpeded operation.

Innocent sensual pleasure expands the heart with benevolence towards all men, causes us to take greater interest in every thing about us, makes us sensible to the wants of others, and may frequently excite us to many beneficent and general actions. No man that is worthy the name of man, that has sentiments of humanity about him, but is more ready to help his brethren, and to do them good, when he feels his own good fortune and happiness, and is pleased and cheerful in the enjoyment of it.

Innocent sensual pleasure is properly obtained by honest persevering industry in our calling, and is, at the same time, the due reward of it : a reward of which persons even in the lowest stations of life are capable, and probably are most in want of ; a reward that supports them by its expectation in their most laborious toils, and renders the most disagreeable and the most painful employments easy and light.

And how adapted is the enjoyment of innocent sensual pleasure to raise the heart of the rational, the true christian, to God, the author and giver of pleasure ! It replenishes him entirely with the sentiment of his bounty. It inspires him with inward love and gratitude towards his benevolent creator and father. It awakens in him a pure, exalted, cheerful piety. It allows him to hope for more and larger displays of bounty from the Most High ; and opens to him the brightest prospects

of higher, nobler kinds of pleasure, in a more perfect state.

All these consequences and effects, which attend on innocent and temperate sensual pleasure, must certainly give it a manifold real value. And we must either be ignorant of the necessities of man, if we forbid it him altogether, or if we account it to him for a sin, that as a sensual being he should enjoy sensual pleasure. No; every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.

Permit me now, Sirs, to give you a few rules which may be of service to you in the use and enjoyment of sensual pleasure, and secure you from mistakes.

Think not, that because I pronounce all pleasures to be really pleasures, and do not, as usual, condemn them altogether,

that you are therefore to pursue every pleasure without scruple, and enjoy them at all times, and in every agreeable manner. All pleasures are really and actually so ; they produce in us all kinds of agreeable sensations. But all pleasures are not allowed ; all are not harmless ; all are not noble ; all may not be enjoyed at all times, in all circumstances, and in the same proportion. The generality of sensual pleasures are deceitful ; that is, they promise more than they perform ; they but seldom come up to our expectations ; they excite agreeable sensations within us, but not so highly agreeable, such ravishing sensations, as we perhaps concluded they would ; they commonly are far less durable than we desire.— Every, even the most innocent pleasure, may be converted into actual pain, by too frequent, too long, and too continued enjoyment ; when we make them to continue by violence, and endeavour to prolong their duration by force, when it is not the simple

simple exigency of nature, but an artificial requisite of our refined imagination.—Several kinds of pleasure are absolutely interdicted; as all those that are destructive to our bodies or our minds; all that are injurious to our neighbour, in his health, his honour, his property, his reasonable pleasures, or in his circumstances; all that render us unfit or indisposed for the social duties we are bound to perform.—Others are allowable, but only as they are enjoyed at proper seasons, and are not disqualifying or detrimental to the relish of more pure and exalted pleasures.

Be, therefore—this is my second rule—be prudent, careful, and conscientious in the choice of your pleasures. Do not imagine the first that solicits you to be the best. This is to do like children, who are yet defective in that which generally distinguishes men from the inferior animals, I mean judgement, and follow in-

stinct more than consideration and reflection.. Men are to distinguish themselves from children by the selection of their pleasures. Suffer no pleasure to impose upon you, to persuade or beguile you, to which of yourself you are not inclined ; or which, according to time, and your present disposition, you had rather change for another, perhaps some nobler pleasure. Examine the pleasure that intices you, by the rules of wisdom, of prudence, of religion, and of christianity ; by your present wants and circumstances. Ask yourself : By this pleasure shall I do no injustice to any one, hurt none, neglect no necessary, indispensable duty towards my parents, my children, my family, my fellow-citizens, or my fellow-creatures ? Will not my worldly affairs be hurt by it ? will it be prejudicial or serviceable to my health ? will it wound my peace, or promote it ? will it administer temptation and charms to sin and vice, or afford encouragement and

and incitement to virtue? will it tend to fit or to unfit me for the discharge of my duty, to make me more slothful or more active? will it lead me off from God; or, by a rational and discreet enjoyment of his bounty, connect me closer to him? will it deprive me of my taste for serious occupations, for sublimer pleasures, of all relish for the worship of God and the practice of piety, or inspire me with new eagerness and powers thereto? am I sure that it will never cause me remorse and mental pain; that I shall always recollect it with satisfaction and with thankfulness to God who allowed me to enjoy it? shall I not lay a stumbling in the way of any one, or needlessly give him pain by the indulgence of this gratification? shall I not probably thereby induce others of the same station with myself, but not in such good circumstances, to follow my example, and so prejudice themselves and others? and am I, in short, actually in want of this pleasure?

have

have I first deserved it by some useful actions, by a faithful and diligent observation of my duty? have I so consumed my strength by labouring in my vocation, or by any other laudable means, that I am in want of this recreation? for, as it is said, “He that will not work, so neither should he eat;” much rather may it be said, “He who hath not worked, is not authorised to take any pleasure, neither can he completely enjoy it.”—Whoever earnestly makes these reflections, will certainly indulge himself in no pleasures that are not permitted, or that may be manifestly detrimental to himself or to others, will seldom err in the choice of his pleasures, and never transgress the bounds of moderation; and they will constantly be to him, what they were intended to be in the gracious designs of their bountiful Creator—not the business, not the main concern, not the end and aim—but the support, the recreation, the animation, encouragement, and

and incitement to duty, the path to higher perfection.

A third rule, that may assist us in the choice of our pleasures, is this : always prefer those pleasures and diversions which are at the same time profitable, to such as are simply pleasures and diversions, or the advantage whereof is very remote and almost imperceptible. In this view, the more mental pleasures have a manifest preference to the barely sensual. When I please my palate by well-tasted, or charm it by generous and racy wine ; when I flatter my olfactory nerves by aromatic and delicious odours ; when I delight myself in the sensations of a genial warmth, a refreshing breeze, or other gentle impressions on the organs of feeling ; when I beguile the tediousness of time by honest diversion ; when I totally unbend, and yield alternately to the sweet impressions of outward things ; all this is real pleasure ; but it

it is merely pleasure, nothing but pleasure, that is sometimes advantageous in its consequences, but never of itself. As often, on the other hand, as I engage in useful and instructive conversation, or sensible discourse; as often as I contemplate the beauties of nature, or the harmony of sounds, or the works of art, with earnestness and sentiment; as often as I administer wholesome food to my mind, my sagacity and my sensibility, by reading or hearing; as often as I employ myself in reflection or devotion, or in the works of beneficence; so often I enjoy pleasure, actual pleasure, but not merely pleasure. I at the same time enjoy a useful exercise of my mental powers, of my taste, my sensibility, and my talents, and accordingly forward my perfection and felicity. Therefore continue no labour to absolute fatigue, till you are quite weakened and exhausted, and so force yourself to seek mere pleasure, or rather a not disagreeable inactivity and repose, for attending

ing to your health or your life. If then the choice of your pleasures depends on yourself, and you may enjoy one as well as another without detriment; prefer that which by a moderate employment affords you recreation and exercise at once, to that which barely gives you rest, or barely pleasure, or inspires you with new strength and vigour only in its effects.

Fourthly, let no sensual pleasure become a passion, if you would not run the hazard of losing your freedom, and of falling into the most lamentable bondage. He that indulges himself as frequently in sensual pleasure as he has the means and opportunities for it, will soon find that he cannot forego it without uneasiness and pain: and he who cannot deprive himself of it, without thinking himself miserable, will soon find it become a passion; that is, he will no longer be able to withstand the calls and allurements of it—will prefer it to all other

kinds of pleasure, sacrifice them all to that one, and think himself happy in the enjoyment of that alone. And when he once is so far gone, how can the man still preserve his freedom? how will he be able to do that which reason and conscience in all events enjoin him to perform as the fittest and best? how often will he neglect the most urgent affairs, and violate the most sacred duties, for pursuing this pleasure which is every thing to him! how often will the bare want of this, or the impossibility of enjoying it, render him averse and unfit to any other exertion of his faculties, indispose him for any serious business, for any necessary employment!—and how can a man in this situation be happy? nay, the oftener he must deny himself the pleasure he so passionately pursues (and neither his own nature, nor the nature of other things and other men, will allow him so frequently to enjoy it as he would wish) the oftener therefore he must deny

deny himself to it, so much the oftener must he, more or less, be miserable. Would you then avoid this bondage and this misery? then suffer not the inclination to sensual pleasure to get the command over you; allow it not to become so violent as that you cannot withstand it: To this end, accustom yourselves to abstinence from this kind of pleasures. Enjoy them not so frequently as circumstances and time permit; not so frequently as you have opportunities and inclination thereto. Break off from them at times, on purpose, that you may learn to be deprived of them without anxiety or vexation; merely that you may maintain the command over yourself, and the rights of your reason and liberty; merely that you may not become the slaves to such things, as you probably must, one time or other, relinquish whether you will or no, and the privation of which would render you unhappy, if you had

pre-

previously accustomed yourself to it. Hard as the observance of this rule may appear, Sirs, it is absolutely necessary for every man who would be wise and virtuous, and capable of lasting peace and a solid felicity.

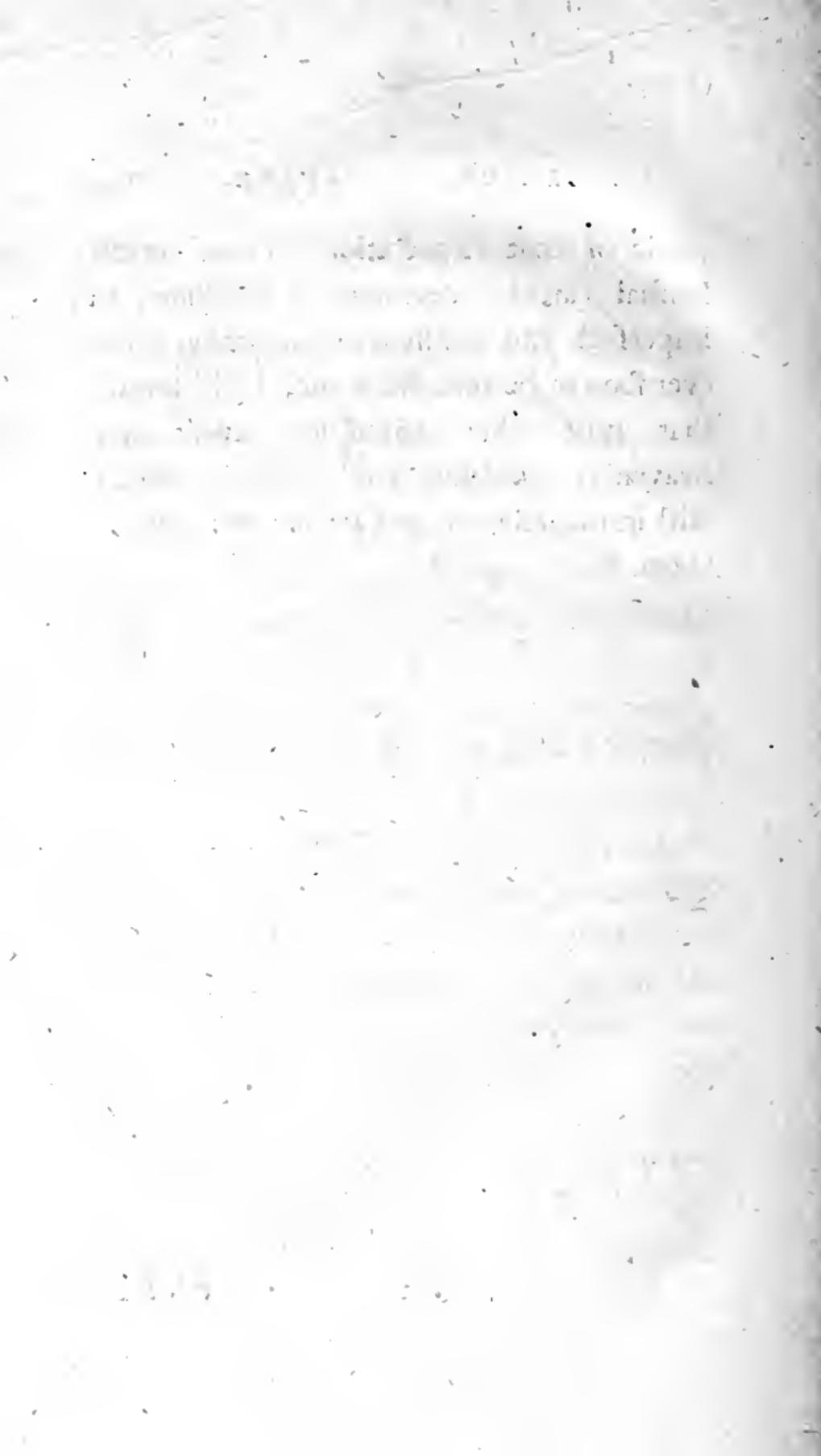
Lastly, for the enjoyment of sensual pleasure, however innocent they may be, neglect not the loftier and purer pleasures of the mind: Let them not render you unfit for these. Let these ever have the precedence over them. They are deceitful, transient, and of short duration; these are altogether what they seem; perform all that they promise, and even more; are incorruptible and eternal. The former we can only enjoy so long as we have these organs of sense; with the death of our body they fall totally away. The latter abide by us after we have past the grave, and gate of death; we can enjoy them as long as our spirit exists, and lives, and acts.

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The knowledge of truth will be a joy to us for ever, yield us inexhaustible materials for reflection and pleasure, and raise us continually to higher knowledge. Goodness, virtuous dispositions, actions, and attitudes, will never cease from blessing us with the delightful sentiments of perfection and intrinsic value. Communion with God will be to us an inexhaustible source of the most elevated pleasure and joy. But these spiritual pleasures can only then be so, after we have known, and loved, and sought and enjoyed them here, and preferred them to every other pleasure. He that has confined himself here to merely sensual pleasures, must necessarily be miserable in the future state. He brings with him the eager desire of pleasure, and all the means for gratifying it are gone. Can you represent to yourselves a state of greater torment than this?

Beware, Sirs, of this ; purify and exalt your taste, frequently reflect on your future lot ; say oft to yourselves ; No, I am not wholly dust, not totally to undergo corruption ; I am not merely an animal man. There is a spirit within me capable of a rational and undecaying happiness, and a greater felicity ; a spirit, whose life and nutriment consists not in meat and drink, not in sensual desire, but in knowledge and virtue, and love towards God and man ; a spirit, whose future destination is filled with such pleasures, as I at present most seek, most value, and most love. Mere sensual pleasures cannot satisfy it ; they follow it not into its higher state ; it cannot transport them with it into a better world. No ; I will even now endeavour to assure myself of those nobler pleasures, those purer joys, to which I am invited as a man and a christian ; will at present practise every thing that can render me capable

pable of that expectation ! Then, let all sensual earthly pleasures be as short, as imperfect, and transient as they may, however soon to be torn from me, I still know, that quite other satisfactions await me, heavenly, godlike, and eternal, which will immensely compensate for the loss of them:



E S T I M A T E IX.

THE

V A L U E

OF

SPIRITUAL PLEASURES.

Be filled with the spirit:

Ephes. v. 18.



THE

V A L U E
O F

SPIRITUAL PLEASURES.

FREQUENTLY have I already recommended spiritual pleasures to you, as the purest, the most noble, and the most lasting of all others. Frequently have I represented them to you as the most worthy of us, both as men and as christians, as the most adequate to our high destination, and the fittest preparation for our entrance on the future state. Often have I encouraged and exhorted you to give them the preference to all other kinds of pleasure, with the assurance that you will not be

Sorry for your choice. Even in my last discourse when we handled the value of sensual pleasures, I demonstrated those of the spirit to be far more excellent. And this they certainly are; as certainly and indisputably as our spirit is of a nobler nature and frame than our body; as certainly as things undecaying are better than transitory, infinite greater than finite, eternity of more consequence than time; as certainly as that our affinity with spiritual substances, with Jesus, and with God himself, is nobler and more respectable than our analogy with the plants and the beasts of the field. He that is acquainted with these spiritual pleasures, who knows them by experience, and has often enjoyed them, can never relinquish them; they will be as urgently necessary to him as eating and drinking to the sensual man; and he runs so little risk of losing his relish for them, that, on the contrary, he will have cause to beware lest he should utterly despise and

reject all other pleasures of an inferior order, the enjoyment of which is not only allowed, but is often needful and wholesome.

And yet there are comparatively but a small number of persons who are of this opinion. Sensual pleasures are in general far higher prized, far more ardently sought after, far more steadfastly pursued than spiritual. The former will find a hundred admirers and encomiaists, where the latter will scarcely have one. The former make a hundred times the subject and joy of social conversations ; while the latter are scarcely mentioned, I mean mentioned with truth and sentiment. Every one praises the former, both young and old, whether he partakes of them or not ; while the latter are but seldom noticed, and declared to be what they really are.

And

And whence does this arise? Does it not, partly at least, proceed from hence, that these pleasures are not sufficiently known; that we do not rightly understand what they are, what they produce, what they insure to us, and wherein their proper value consists? Indeed the essence of pleasure, of whatever kind, or that which causes pleasure to be so, is not to be described, not strictly to be defined. Pleasure is sentiment. He that would properly know it, he that would taste its sweets, must himself experience, must himself enjoy it. Let us, however, investigate the sources of these pleasures, and display their fruits and effects. Something, at least, may be said of their nature and frame. And thereby a greater attention may be excited towards them, and a greater desire of attaining to them. Probably a resolution may be wrought in us to become better acquainted with them by a diligent examination of their merits.

And

And this is what I am desirous of doing at present in regard of spiritual pleasures. I may, perhaps, contribute either to render such to whom they are strange, or not sufficiently familiar, more attentive to them, or to strengthen and confirm the avidity and love of them in such as have already directed their taste that way.

This is, if not the only, at least an indispensable means of obeying the apostle's injunction, when he exhorts the christians to be filled with the spirit. Be impressed with the spirit of religion; open your understanding and your heart to its influence; let that which makes you wise and upright christians, which inspires you with prudent and virtuous dispositions, which will give you a spiritual life, spiritual faculties, and spiritual joys, be much dearer to you than any other gratifications. Seek them with infinitely greater ardour than such as degrade your spirit, and may easily lead you

you astray. We shall not therefore depart from the purpose of the apostolical exhortation, if we

Acquaint you with the qualities of spiritual pleasures, and their excellent value. To this end, I shall,

First, make some general reflections on spiritual pleasures; and

Then go through the principal kinds of them in particular, and point out their value.

You know, Sirs, from my last discourse; what we are to understand by spiritual pleasures; namely, pleasures which our spirit procures to itself, which are produced more by its own activity than by the impressions made externally on our senses. Our senses indeed afford us the materials thereto, they give our spirit the first ideas of

of them, and they are improved and nourished by their ministration. But our spirit employs these materials, arranges, separates, and combines them; it reflects upon that which we perceive and experience by our sight, by our hearing, and by our feeling. Proceeds from particulars to generals, from visible to invisible; and when it discovers order, truth, beauty, goodness, and perfection, it forms mental representations of them, more or less active and apparent, and can withal make returns upon itself and its powers with consciousness. Or whenever it can exert and display its proper powers easily and effectually in a manner adapted to its views and desires—let the things wherein it is employed be either true or not true, good or evil; it then enjoys what we term spiritual pleasure. It has a pleasant sensation of its existence, of its present condition, which is founded on this sentiment and display of its

its capacities and powers, and its reference to the whole material and spiritual world.

These spiritual pleasures are frequently divided into pleasures of the understanding and pleasures of the heart. The pleasures of the understanding are founded on knowledge, clear penetration on plain and comprehensive conceptions, and a luminous entrance into the unlimited regions of truth; on the great multitude of ideas, which, however astonishing in number, have no common connection between them; on easy, quick, and happy turns of wit, on the imagination, and on reason. The pleasures of the heart consist more in lively sentiments, the demonstration and display of what is true, beautiful, good, generous, or great and extraordinary; but principally in benevolence and beneficence.—In fact, they are not properly to be separated, they are all operations of one and the same spiritual power, the understand-

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ing having generally an equal share in each, and they cannot be farther distinguished.

Every spiritual, as well as every sensual pleasure, is real pleasure, is, for the time, a really agreeable sensation, whether morally good or evil, innocent or criminal. When the envious and malevolent man divulges any secret infirmity of his brother, drags into view his imperfections and failings, and delights in displaying them to the world, when he indulges his rancour on the misfortunes of an enemy, and enjoys the description of them with all their lamentable effects ; he receives a real pleasure, he actually feels agreeable sensations. But his pleasure is so far from being enviable, that it is detestable, shocking, and diabolical ; a pleasure that debases and destroys the man ; a pleasure, that sooner or later will repay him with pain and remorse, will deprive him of a thousand nobler

nobler pleasures, and make him at length incapable of them.

Hence it follows, that there are likewise spiritual pleasures that are unlawful and guilty. All of them are not harmless, all of them are not noble, or worthy of the man and the christian. To devise diffusive, complicated, and artful schemes for compassing the hurt of another, and to execute them effectually, notwithstanding all the obstacles and difficulties a man meets with in his dark, sinister, and perilous way, to employ his sagacity in exciting perplexity and doubt on matters of serious concern—to torture the innocent by his wit, to tarnish the merit of the deserving, to make respectable things ridiculous, to give free scope to his humour in writings or discourse, however it may wound or displease; all this is spiritual pleasure, but low, disgraceful, guilty pleasure. Pleasure that can excite agreeable sensations only in the heart

heart of ungenerous, evil-minded, and vicious men.

Still farther. Even harmless, exalted spiritual pleasures may become hurtful when immoderately enjoyed, when continued till they exhaust our powers, destroy our health, or even shorten our life. Even innocent, noble pleasures may become criminal, when by our inflexible adherence to them we are prevented from discharging the duties of our station, our office, or our vocation; when they deprive us of the society and conversation of our fellow-creatures; when, by too strictly avoiding all sensual or social pleasures, we bring wisdom, virtue, and prudence, into disrepute. Thus will even the pleasures of piety be hurtful and guilty in respect of a man, who should neglect the affairs of his calling for them, or omit his duty towards his parents, his children, or his family.—These observations, Sirs, will be sufficient for

giving you a conception of spiritual pleasures in general, and to keep you from misapplying these just representations of them.

Every application of our spiritual powers that is performed without violence, or wearisome efforts, with ease and effect, procures us spiritual pleasures, be the object what it may, important or unimportant, great or small, whether it relate to religion or the sciences, or the arts, or to common life. Whenever we frame in our minds clear representations of things, discriminate them more or less by our acuteness, discover their principles and connections by our reason—or, by our imagination, make what is absent to be present to us, render the invisible visible, give a reality in our minds to what is barely possible; and thus, as it were, create new worlds of our own: whenever we manifest our powers in this or any similar manner, and

and are conscious of it to ourselves, we immediately experience a pleasing sentiment of existence, and of our actual condition. We are rejoiced to feel that we have this power, that we exert it, that we are able to employ it in such various ways, and with such good effects, that we can apply it to these or other matters. And this sentiment of our faculties must be so much the more delightful to us, must communicate so much greater value to our pleasures, so much clearer conviction, that they essentially belong to our Self, and are a far more solid ground of our perfection and happiness, than all the outward things that we possess and esteem.

We therefore farther enjoy spiritual pleasure when we labour at the augmentation and rectification of our knowledge, and are employed to this end in reading or reflection, or in both of them at once. And, in fact, Sirs, what a pleasure must it pro-

cure us when we consider the works of nature ; when we investigate the plants, the animals, and man, their various powers, faculties, views, connections, operations, and objects ; when we contemplate the diversity, the greatness, the order, the beauty, the harmony of all the Creator's works ! every where life, activity, and action—every where design, principles, and means of felicity, and enjoy, or actual enjoyment, enjoyment infinitely diversified of happiness and delight ; on all sides so great and such various powers arising, unfolding themselves, and operating in their allotted sphere ; operating in such various, in such opposite directions, and ever contributing to the support and advantage of the whole ! What a pleasure, when we lift up ourselves in thought from the earth to the skies, and are lost among the numberless multitude of suns and worlds, of sources of existence and life, of new theatres of the majesty and glory of God, and soaring from

from one part of his immeasurable kingdom to another, and never discover either border or limits to his power and wisdom ! when we find the Creator of the world every where great, immensely great in every part as in the whole, in a grain of sand as in the fabric of the world, immensely great, and immensely good ! What a delightful, what a ravishing sentiment of our powers, of our existence, of our relationship with the world and its author, must these considerations and prospects excite in our hearts ! With what a pure and spiritual pleasure must we be filled ! and this, in a greater or a less degree, must every enlargement of our views, every addition to our knowledge, every not totally successless investigation of nature and the design of things, produce ; every step whereby we approach to the discovery of truth, or which gives us a plainer and clearer conception of the truths we already know. This is produced in particular by the considera-

tion of the doctrines of religion, as God himself has revealed them in his word, and principally by Jesus. The purer, the richer, the more certain the sources of this knowledge be, the more must they satisfy our thirst after illumination, and truth, and assurance ; the more true and lasting pleasure must we acquire from them.

A third source of spiritual pleasure lies particularly in reflections on ourselves, on our nature, our powers and faculties, our present and future condition. Certainly, a wide and fruitful field of meditation, which, if we love goodness, with all our faults and infirmities, opens to us far more pleasant than unpleasant views, supplies us with far more materials for agreeable than disagreeable sensations. What man but must rejoice in his existence, when he knows and feels it, when he has learnt what is, and has been, and will be; when, with all his imperfections and weaknesses,

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he evidently discovers in himself the lineaments of the image of God, the germ of future dignity and grandeur ; when he sees how much he may increase from everlasting to everlasting, in knowledge and virtue, and activity, and bliss ! when we reflect what God has already done for man by Jesus, and how much greater things he allows him to hope for in the future world ! What prolific dispositions, what great, and as yet almost unopened abilities, what active and effective powers, but at present circumscribed and limited on all sides, and restrained and compressed, does he find in himself, when he at times investigates the texture of his soul, and observes the activity and career of his spirit ! then how must his appointment rejoice him ; and how much greater and nobler must this joy be than all sensible and transient things can give him !

Fourthly, it is a great spiritual pleasure, when we labour at our moral improvement, and find our labour attended by happy effects. What a delightful sensation we feel when we have avoided one temptation to sin, or fortunately conquered another! when we form a good purpose and carry it into execution ! now, no more to commit a fault that used so often and so suddenly to surprize us, no longer to submit to its strong attractions ! then to perform with readiness and joy some good and generous action, which used to seem so hard, to which we were much averse, and must be urged to it by compulsion ! What a pleasure when we perceive a greater degree of truth, order, and harmony constantly presiding over our dispositions, our sentiments, our opinions, and our actions ; that we are ever more seldom liable to error and sin, seldomer deceived by sensual desires, or driven about by inordinate passions ; that our love of goodness is always improving in strength

strength and activity ; that we are constantly advancing towards christian perfection and freedom, and thereby to a nearer resemblance with Jesus, our leader and lord, and ever more fit to be in fellowship with God himself ! to conquer oneself, and to overcome the world ; to be able to transport oneself from bondage to freedom ; to feel new life, new strength within ; to be proceeding on the way of wisdom and virtue ; to be constantly advancing nearer to the mark of our high calling,—what intrinsic, what pure delights must a man procure himself thereby, who feels his own dignity, and strives after perfection ! and how much more value must these pleasures acquire in his eyes, as all of them are adapted to procure him riches and honour, to improve his circumstances, and to give him sensual pleasures !

We enjoy, fifthly, spiritual pleasures, when we hold useful and instructive discourse

course with others ; when we reciprocally impart our observations, our doubts and experiences to each other ; confirm one another in our good and christian dispositions ; when in this communion we deliberate on our affairs and prospects both in the present and the future world ; and this in the spirit of love ; in the language of confidence, and in the abundance of our heart ! Then one thought brings forth and develops another ; one sentiment excites and corroborates another, one heart warms and rejoices another. One helps another forward in the way of improvement, of wisdom, of happiness and virtue. Each partakes of the light, of the warmth, of the life, and the powers of the rest. And what is more blessed, than in this way to give and to receive, and thereby to unite oneself more closely with wise and good men ! how far must this noble spiritual pleasure, which is never exhausted and never insipid, which brings after it neither vexation

vexation nor remorse, how far must it excel every other, every smaller kind of spiritual social pleasure !

A sixth source of spiritual pleasure, no less rich, and still purer than the former, is a general hearty benevolence towards all mankind. How delighted must this make the spirit of the man, of the christian ! what mild and genial sensations must it excite and support ! he sees his brethren and sisters in all the human race, creatures and children of his heavenly Father ; sharers in his immortality, and the glories of everlasting life ; how pleasant then must their countenances be to him ! how much beauty, goodness, and amiableness, must he see in them, which is and remains invisible to the eyes of the envious, the malicious, and the thoughtless man ! how great a share, how agreeable, and delightful a share does he take in their fortunes, their merit, their success, and their advances in the way of

perfection! how heartily does he rejoice therein! how blessed in them, and with them; while all is indifferent to the unfeeling man, who finds nothing in it for his thoughts or his sensations!

And when he proportionably exerts his benevolence, and is actually beneficent towards his brethren, in serving and helping them, in comforting and clearing them, in lessening their misery, in advancing their happiness; when he in general leads a useful life, and is productive of goodness about him: how happy is he then! what pleasures stream into his heart, and what still purer has he not to hope for, what inexhaustible sources of pleasure in futurity, in the prospect of all the good consequences of his beneficent deeds!

Lastly, Sirs, the noblest and most exalted kind of spiritual pleasure, are doubtless the pleasures of piety. Represent to your-

yourselves, that at least you may acquire some conceptions of this pleasure; represent to yourselves a man, who raises himself with his whole spirit to the Most High, whose whole soul is penetrated with thoughts of God, who feels the presence of him with stronger vivacity than ordinary, perceives his power, his wisdom, his goodness, on all sides, in the clearest light, feels that, in this God he lives, and moves, and has his being, that his God is his creator, his protector, his father, his benefactor, and will be so forever; that through him he subsists, and thinks, and acts, and is happy; a man who rejoices in his God, and enjoys a close and intimate connection with him, experiences the highest, and constantly efficient benevolence of this God towards him; meditates on all the goodness he has received of him, and expects, in perfect confidence, still larger supplies of bounty from him; a man that prostrates himself before the great

parent of the world, in sentiments of reverence and love, addresses him as the Being from whom all things proceed, and to whom all things belong, loses himself in reflections on his majesty and splendor, reposes entirely on his will, in perfect confidence surrenders to him the guidance and direction of his life, lays all his thoughts, his sentiments, his desires, his wants, his cares, his hopes, without dread or hesitation, before him, and from the fulness of divine power and love imbibes and enjoys whatever can strengthen and comfort, and improve, and bless him ; a man who represents this God to himself, as he is revealed to us by Jesus, feels the entire felicity of his near connection and relationship with the only-begotten of the Father, with the Saviour and deliverer of men, the entire felicity of a redeemed of the Lord, of being a member of his spiritual body, of being a christian, and of thus having fellowship with the Father, and with Jesus his son ; a man, who, in
these

these blessed views, these inward sentiments of the Godhead, unites himself with all his brethren upon earth in the presence of their common father, who embraces them all, like him, in the arms of his benevolence and love, who strives to bring them all with himself to a nearer approximation to him, to render them more well-pleasing in his sight, and to enlarge their capacities of his dilection and goodness; a man, in short, who loses from his sight what is terrestrial and transient, already transports himself in spirit, into his future and better state, joins the society of just men made perfect, soars to the abodes of superior spirits, already tastes something of their purer felicity, and enjoys beforehand the pleasures he is hereafter to receive; represent to yourselves, I say, such a man, such a christian, and pronounce whether such practices of piety do not render him happy in a high degree; whether the pleasure, the satisfaction, the joy they procure him, must

must not be the greatest, the most exalted, the most excellent of all the pleasures whereof he is capable.

Behold then so many abundant sources of spiritual pleasures that stand open to you! You may all draw water out of these wells of salvation!—draw joy and felicity from them!—Spiritual pleasures are not reserved exclusively to the scholar or the divine. No; they are adapted to you all! None are deficient in all the faculties and means for the enjoyment of them; none can neglect them without manifestly injuring his happiness. But indeed they are not alike copious to all, equally lively, equally agreeable and delightful. Indeed they must be almost wholly unknown and foreign to you, if you do not exercise your spiritual powers, if you do not elevate them above sensible things, if you do not accustom yourselves to reflect upon what you see, what you hear, what you do, and what you

you experience ; if you studiously avoid retirement and silence, the parent of the purest of spiritual pleasures ; or if you regard knowledge, and wisdom, and virtue, as indifferent things.

Avoid these mistakes, Sirs, if you would understand what spiritual pleasures are, and enjoy them when understood. Exercise yourselves in whatever may procure you such pleasures, though at first they shold seem hard or disagreeable to you. As there are various kinds of sensible pleasures of which we cannot partake, unless we have learnt and practised them ; so likewise must our capacities be drawn forth and exercised to spiritual pleasures, our taste must be framed to them, we must know them, must use the proper means to acquire them, must enjoy, and learn to enjoy them more.

Learn to reflect, to think with consciousness and consideration, think on what

you have thought of, again and again, till it be clear and plain to your understanding, and important to your heart. Study to read, to hear, to feel, and to observe, with attention, reflection, and interest. Learn to collect your thoughts, and prevent their dispersion. Frequently call them off from outward things, and direct them to yourself, to your present condition, and your future state. Learn particularly to converse with God, in all situations to think of him and to behold him, to triumph in his existence, his presence, and his benefactions. Learn to pray, and thereby to have communion with him. Do this, though never so imperfectly at first, in ever so short, so interrupted, and so irksome a way, from your infirmity and want of practice. But do it frequently; devote certain hours, and times thereto; return to it again; let not your weaknesses terrify you from it; think not to reap before you have sown. The oftener, the more sedulously you do this,

this, so much the easier and the more clearly will you do it, so much the more pleasure will you procure and find, so much the higher relish for this kind of pleasures ; and soon you will not be able to do without it, you will prefer it infinitely beyond any thing else.

I will not say, that you must relinquish all sensual pleasures, for seeking and enjoying only such as are spiritual. No ; you may enjoy them both ; but these are much purer, nobler, and more lasting than the others ; these will render you far more perfect and happy than they can do ; they must be of infinitely greater value to you, if you would be what you are ordained to be as men, and as christians.

And herein, Sirs, you must take Jesus, our great captain and guide, for your pattern, who has gone the way of wisdom and happiness before you. He enjoyed like-

wise sensual pleasures ; sat down to feasts ; associated with men of various kinds ; ate and drink, as he says himself, like other folks, without distinguishing himself from them by an extraordinary austerity. But spiritual pleasures had infinitely the preference with him. To do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work, and to be useful to his brethren, was his food, his pleasantest, his darling business. The pleasure of doing good was preferred by him to all the conveniences of life, to sleep, to rest, and to every other comfort. He past whole nights in prayer and thanksgiving ; not from compulsion, not because it was his duty ; but because it was his delight, and his real life. He took part in all that happened around him ; but always so that his spirit was busy in it, reflecting upon it, and seeking to apply it by some means or other to the instruction and advantage of such as stood by. God, futurity, his mission from the Father, his re-

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turn to him, his grand, beneficent work on earth, were ever before his eyes, and ever in his heart. Love towards God, his heavenly Father, and love towards men, directing and blessing him at every step, were the soul of all his sentiments and actions, the source of his sublime, his god-like joy ! Endeavour to resemble him in this, all of you who endeavour after christian perfection and happiness. Consider yourselves not barely as sensual creatures ; not merely as mortal, but also as immortal men ; not merely as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, but likewise as the citizens of heaven ; confine not your views to things visible and transitory, but extend them to the invisible and eternal ; strive to fulfill your whole vocation, and so possess every real joy, every kind of felicity which God hath prepared for you, both in this and the future world.

E S T I M A T E X.

T H E

V A L U E

O F

D E V O T I O N.

Be filled with the spirit.

Ephes. v. 18.

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T H E



THE

V A L U E

OF

D E V O T I O N.

DEVOTION, this noblest of all spiritual pleasures; devotion undergoes the reproach, not only of confessedly wicked men, but at times likewise of better disposed persons, as promising more than it performs, as being more cried up than its merits deserve. The principles, however, on which these judgements are founded are very different. The former, the vicious man, has no sentiment, no feeling for refined spiritual pleasures. God, and religion, and silent meditation upon them, are matters

matters of no importance to him ; often, perhaps, irksome or frightful to him. He therefore rejects every thing he hears said and reported, of the joys of this nature, as the effects of fancy and self-deceit.—The latter, the well-disposed man, does not proceed so far. The exercises of religion are not indifferent to him. He has suggestions and presentiments in their favour, that they may be useful and agreeable. He has observed these exercises not absolutely without pleasure. But prejudices, want of experience, imperfect examinations of the subject, prevent him from taking them for what they really are, from enjoying what others pretend to enjoy therein ; and the suspicion of their being less important, and less productive, is continually increasing upon him.—I have frequently, says he to himself, I have frequently heard of the value, the excellency, and the utility of devotion. Devotion, it is said, diffuses

diffuses the clearest light over the understanding of man ; warms his heart with the noblest sentiments, with the most delightful sensations of the love of God and man ; is his best comforter in all the cares and troubles of life ; procures him the purest and the sublimest joys ; and brings him constantly nearer to the divinity. I will believe it, says the mistaken or the feeble christian, since people say so. The testimony is of weight with me. But my experience, I must confess, is not in correspondence with it. I pray, I read too ; I attend the church service ; and I do all this with attention, and in the view of becoming better and happier. But the illumination, the pleasure, the joy, which others boast, I feel nothing of. On the contrary, the performance of these duties is frequently burdensome to me, I am often forced to do violence to myself, if I would avoid distraction on such occasions ; and, after these exercises,

exercises, I commonly find myself neither better, nor more at rest, nor more satisfied than I was before. Let a strong temptation present itself, I fall as directly under it. If any misfortune befalls me, it as quickly oversets me. If I suffer any considerable loss, I can scarcely support it. Am I to make any sacrifice to virtue, to forego all thoughts of revenge, or to do good to my enemy ? I am deficient in power and inclination to it. If I fall into danger, I no more know what part to take, or whom to trust. Where then is the mighty advantage, the great blessing of devotion ? Is it not all, perhaps, fanaticism and fancy ? No ; that it is not, my christian brother, my christian sister ! it is truth and reason ; it is really and truly what such as understand and revere it, give out that it is. The deficiency of thy experience cannot demonstrate the contrary. It only demonstrates, that thy devotion is not what it might and what it ought to be.

Every

Every thing that passes for devotion is not truly such. No term perhaps is more lavished, misapplied, and profaned than this. One while it is made to signify outward, ceremonious, usages and solemnities. At another, the merely being present at the public worship. Sometimes a cold reading or repeating of certain forms of prayer. And sometimes every reflection, however erroneous, in God or religion, is honoured with this respectable name.— Yet all this is not devotion. At most, it is only something like devotion, or something that may excite it.—It can therefore possess none of the value, procure none of the advantages, nor afford us any of the joys which devotion confers upon us.—No; this is not what the words of the apostle imply, the being filled with the spirit. The signification of this is much larger. It means a heart thoroughly impressed with the doctrines of religion and christianity,

and a perfect confidence in them. To settle your notions on this matter, to warn you against misconceptions about it, and to give some suggestions to worthy and fruitful devotion, is the design of my present discourse. To this end I shall do two things.

First, point out to you what devotion is, wherein its value consists, what benefit it procures to mankind; and

Then, what is required of a man, what he must do, wherein he must exercise himself, of what he must beware, for obtaining the advantages of it, and in particular for enjoying the pure pleasure we are promised from devotion, and for constantly improving that enjoyment.

Devotion is not so much a duty, as the prerogative and the reward of duty. It is not to be commanded; not to be extorted;

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all men are not capable of it; all cannot enjoy it in the same manner, and to the same degree. It is the property rather of the confirmed and trained than of the weak and unsettled christian. It bespeaks an enlightened mind, a good, well-regulated heart, an innocent conduct, free from all intentional transgressions and iniquities, a certain exercise and skill in reflecting on spiritual matters, a confirmed taste for them; in short, a certain avidity for retirement, and for self-investigation. When the man, the christian, who finds himself in possession of these, collects himself from distraction, betakes himself to retirement, and there directs his meditations towards God and sacred things, the attention he bestows on these matters is devotion. These things will be of the utmost importance to him; his heart will take the greatest, the strongest interest in them; hence will proceed sentiments of reverence, of love, of gratitude towards God, a hearty confidence

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in him, a perfect submission to his will, sentiments of joy, of hope, of affiance, of aspirations after purer and more exalted virtue and happiness, after a closer connection with God, a more intimate union with Jesus, as the chieftain and head of the christian fold. And then he enjoys the benefit of devotion, the advantages and the pleasures it procures its friends and confidents. And how great are these advantages ! how diversified these benefits and pleasures !

Nothing elevates and fortifies the spirit of a man more than devotion. He lifts up himself to God, and meditates on his greatness and glory ; he exalts himself to the Father of spirits, to the eternal source of light, of power, of truth, of beauty, and perfection. He feels his connection, his intimate, indissoluble, his blessed connection with this first, and greatest, and best of beings. He sees and considers all things around

around him, as the work of his hands, as the objects of his providence and his bounty. He sees and considers himself as his creature, as his rational subject, as his eminently favoured child, as the object of his loving-kindness and mercy, as an instrument of his all-quicken^g spirit, his ever-operating power. And when he thus approaches his Creator and Father, and has such a communion with him, how much more justly, generously, and nobly does he learn to think, and judge, and feel ! how readily does he perceive the wretchedness of all human grandeur ! how far does he soar above the thousands of little terref^rtrial concerns, so many insignificant objects of the envy, the jealousy, and the dissentions of mankind ! how is he occupied with more and much loftier things, in close participation, with delight and love ! and what strength must this impart to his spirit ! how infinitely must it enlarge the sphere and the comprehension of his

understanding! how much the sensibility of his heart! how much more noble, more heavenly, more godlike sentiments, must it give him!

For these reasons, nothing carries a man farther on his progress in virtue than devotion. It makes him more acquainted with God, the original of all that is beautiful, and good, and estimable, and lovely. It renders him more intimate with Jesus, the visible likeness of his Father, the sum and substance of all human perfection. It opens to him on all sides greater displays of truth, and order, and goodness in every part of the immense kingdom of God, in the government of the Most High. It makes him feel the dignity of his nature, and the grandeur of his vocation. It kindles and inflames his ardour to become what he is capable of being. It transports him over the boundaries of death and the grave, and there gives him a glimpse of

the glorious consequences of his endeavours, to think and to act well, and to do the will of his God. And must not this make virtue ever the dearer to him, the practice of it constantly easier, and all the sacrifices it calls him to much more agreeable? Must not this kindle in him an ardent zeal to acquire a nearer and nearer resemblance to Christ, to imitate God, his heavenly Father, and to fit himself for that future life in which his faculties will be improved, and his virtues exalted?

Nothing likewise affords a surer refuge to the pious against the troubles and vexations of life than devotion. In the solemn hours of devotion, he sees every thing in quite another light, in connections totally different. Then many evils cease to be evils in his sight, and are transformed into blessings. Many a gloomy period of his life then brightens up, and that which appeared to him a rough and devious way,

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becomes a straight and even path. He then learns to understand his appointment, though not in its entire consistency; yet he sees and understands that it has a consistency, and that the wisest and best. Then he approaches with filial freedom to his Father in heaven, opens his heart before him, casts all his cares upon him, reposes himself entirely on the will of him, who constantly wills and does the best. In his presence he fears no evil; under his protection he dreads no danger; his gracious and paternal countenance has nothing terrible and revengeful in it, even when he stumbles and falls; he sees in it, as well as in the impression of it, the countenance of Jesus, nothing but commiseration and grace; nay, when he looks up unto him, even death lays by its terrors; how can it tear him from the hands, from the heart of his Father, whose love he so intimately feels, and whose love is as everlasting as himself.

Nothing

Nothing, in short, yields purer and sublimer joys to the pious than devotion. When shall a man more rejoice in his existence, when is he to give fuller scope to his joy, than when he thinks on his intimate connection with his Creator and Father, and his being present with him? When has he more cause to be delighted with life, and satisfied with his lot, than when he is sensible to the dignity and happiness of a creature formed after the image of God, of a christian whom a blessed immortality awaits; than when the loveliest prospects in a better world lie open to his view; when he is animated by the most infallible hope of being more closely united with Jesus; and of always approaching nearer to God; when he feels what perfection he is capable of, and what blessedness awaits him? And what pleasures can be more desirable or more pure than these, which I may enjoy in the most lonely solitude, and in the lowest circumstances;

which I may enjoy when I am abandoned of all that is without me, of all that surrounds me, when every creature refuses me its comfort, its help, its support, when I am surrounded by darkness and death ? And all this I may promise myself from the pleasures of devotion ? on this the pious may build in safety. It will never deny him its support and assistance. This sanctuary stands always open, and never will he flee to it in vain. So great, Sirs, is the value, so manifold are the advantages of devotion.

Would you now enjoy these benefits, these advantages, these pleasures of devotion ? It is then by no means indifferent in what manner you begin. A man may facilitate the business ; and he may likewise render it difficult. Herein his own experience will be the best instructor. We may, however, preserve you from many mistakes and omissions ; we may afford you some assistance ; we may call your attention

tion to the best way of treating the matter. And to this end, I should hope, the following reflections and rules will be of considerable service to you.

The devotion which is to procure us pleasure and joy must, in the first place, be founded on a right knowledge, on just conceptions of God. If thou art weak and unhappy enough, O mortal, to imagine God to be a sullen being, unconnected with the world and his creatures, who has once given them certain powers, prescribed them certain laws, assigned them a certain place in the territory of his wide domain, and then stands in no farther connection with them, has no influence upon them, and no concern about them;—or, if thou thinkest God to be only Almighty, high above all as their Creator and Lord, before whom all worlds and all mankind are nothing, and whose power no creature is able to resist;—or, if thou conceivest

him to be a severe, inexorable, unforgiving Being, who holds every sin to be an infinite affront to his majesty, which can never be repaired, never remitted, never forgiven, which he must necessarily punish, and is continually ready to punish; as a Being that requires more of us than we are able to perform, who has consigned the greatest part of his rational offspring to everlasting perdition, and in whose dominion more evil than good, more misery than happiness prevails; if thou makest such representations to thyself of thy God; then certainly thy exercises of devotion can have no pleasure, no joy, for thee. The thought of thy God must terrify thee, and the more deeply it is imprinted on thy soul, the longer thou dwellest upon it, the more disquietude and torment must come upon thee. Thou wilt tremble before God as thy sovereign and judge, thou wilt feel his authority over thee, and thy dependence on him; but thou canst not enjoy it.—

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Would'st thou do so? Then must thou form more just, more honourable conceptions of this awful Being. Thou must be acquainted with God as thy Father; revere him as love itself, as him who delighteth in the satisfactions of his creatures, who hath designed them all for happiness, who governs them with mercy and compassion; who is not only righteous towards them, but long-suffering, gracious, and merciful, and leadeth all to perfection that are capable of it, though by various ways. Thou must know and revere him, as he is published to us by Jesus, as a God who will not have us to fear him like slaves, but to love him like children, who allows us all free access to him; who receives and blesses us as sons, and does not treat us like bondsmen; who forgives all men their sins, and will remember them no mote, so soon as they lament and forsake them; as a God, who cannot be better and more worthily honoured than by placing our confidence

fidence in him, and by expecting real advantages, pure goodness from him. Only then, O christian! when thou hast thus learnt to think of God; and makest thyself confident by these reflections; only then can he satisfy and rejoice thy heart; only then will every elevation of thy soul, every exercise of devotion be a comfort and a happiness to thee!

Would we, farther, enjoy frequently the advantages and pleasures of devotion, and enjoy them in a higher degree; then must religion and virtue be the constant companions and guides of our life. They must animate us at all times, in all places, in all our businesses and in all our pleasures. They must never totally cease from acting upon us. The pious man sets the Lord always before him. The thoughts of God are neither strange to him, nor at a distance from him. He hath so interwoven them with the whole texture of his mind, and in such

such various ways, that every thing reminds him of his heavenly Father, every thing calls him to him, so that these reflections dart a living light around his soul, and render those things habitually important to him wherein mankind in general see not the least occasion of concern; where they will pronounce him a fool for taking any interest in them. These thoughts thus often fill him in the moments of sacred silence, and of internal exaltation of his heart to God, amidst the bustle of society, in the business of his vocation, and thereby teach him to enjoy social pleasures with more cheerfulness and innocence, and to fulfill more faithfully the duties of social life. Thus often does he feel the intimate presence of his God, comprehend distinctly the language of his wisdom and goodness in every plant, in every tree, in every animal, in every region, in the dawning of the morn, in the summer's day, in the solitary bower, by the

the brink of the placid stream, in the awful gloom of the forest; and there erects altars to the God whom he has not seen, but has intensely thought of and sensibly felt, monuments in his heart which in a thousand similar circumstances, similar reflections, and sensations, he raises within. He sees and hears, as it were, his Maker, in the rushing of the torrent, in the howling of the winds, in the murmurs of the breeze, in the approach of the stormy cloud, in the flash of the vivid lightning, and the majestic sounds of thunder, in the mild refreshing shower, and in the more copious falls of rain! He sees and hears him with still greater energy in mankind, his image, when he discovers truth, and goodness, and benevolence, generous sentiments, and cordial love in the features, the looks, the discourses, the actions of his brethren.—And thus never is God far from him. He seeks and he finds him, and enjoys his presence, be he where he may, buried
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how he will, alone or in company, surrounded by animate or inanimate creatures. He exists and lives, and moves in God. And, when he collects his scattered thoughts, and directs his whole attention to him whom his soul loveth, and whose favour is its life, and can do this without interruption from external things, how blessed must these hours, these moments be ! how much must these meditations expand and warm his heart ! what lofty flights his spirit takes ! what lively sensations act upon his frame ! how nearly it brings him to the prime source of light and felicity !

Would'st thou therefore understand, and learn to enjoy the pleasures of devotion, O thou who complainest of the want of them ; then make the thoughts of God familiar to thee. Send him not away when he presents himself to thy spirit ; he can accommodate himself with all thy other thoughts,

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thy sentiments, thy employments, and thy pleasures, if they be but moderate and innocent. Solace thyself much rather in these meditations; cherish and support them as often as thou canst; imprint them deeply on thine heart, if thou would'st enjoy them by recollection, even when they are past.—Do so likewise with every thing that relates to religion, with every doctrine, every command, every promise, and every example of christianity. Do so particularly with the reflections on Jesus, our Saviour and leader, the similitude and the vicegerent of God, our Lord, and our King. Let his image, the image of his wisdom, his serene and exalted devotion, his generous philanthropy, his noble sentiments and kind behaviour, be frequently before thine eyes, be often present, and, as it were, visible to thee. Make thyself constantly more and more familiar with these thoughts and sensations; bind them still closer and closer with all that thou thinkest and feelest besides,

besides, with whatever is in any way important to thee. Thus, when thou undertakest any peculiar exercise of devotion, thou wilt undertake no business that is foreign to thee; thou wilt not be going into unknown regions, but entering thy own possessions; persevere in that which at first thou canst only endure for a moment, and enjoy that pleasure in a greater degree, in completer freedom, which may sweeten every day of thy life, but which now enhances the value of only some instants of it.

Would you, in the third place, enjoy the advantages and the pleasures of piety, and not be deceived in your expectations, then do not desire to enjoy them always in the same degree. By so doing, you would endeavour after what is impossible, what is contrary to the nature of man, and of devotion itself, and thus your hopes would often fail you. Our comprehensions even of the most important matters, can-

not always possess the same degree of precision; our sensations cannot at all times have the same degree of vivacity and force. Light and heat have their various changes, their alternate revolutions in the moral as well as in the natural world, and in every particular person, as in human society at large. So when we direct our thoughts to God and religion, to the most important and most exalted objects, how much depends on the temperament at that particular time, on our outward circumstances, on the affairs we have been pursuing, on the persons we have seen and conversed with, on the books we have read, or are then employed in reading! How different are even the doctrines of religion which we make the subject of our meditations or our pious exercises! how various are the sides on which we may behold them! and how different therefore the impressions they must make upon us! all of them cannot move us alike, all of them cannot charm us;

all of them cannot draw forth the tears of grief, of tenderness, or joy. One while our understanding is most employed; at another, our heart; and sometimes both at once. Now, the sentiment of our transgressions and failings bows us down to the abyss, pierces us with shame and remorse: at another time, we as sincerely confess, and abhor, and condemn them, but without the same painful sensation. Now, the thoughts of God, of his majesty and greatness, so fully possess us, make all the conceptions and sentiments that belong thereto at once so predominant and active, sets all that is connected with it in our whole system of thought and sentiment so much in motion, that we are totally lost in astonishment and adoration: at another time less copious rays from the splendor of the glory of God stream about our eyes, we consider them with more composure, distinguish them with greater

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facility and clearness; and this, though not with transporting, yet with pure and real joy. One while we are more disposed to reflect on the doctrines of religion with a tranquil spirit, to rectify our conceptions of them, to penetrate deeper into their principles and connections, and then commonly experience no vehement sensations: at another, we make a more immediate use of these doctrines, apply them directly to our quiet, to our comfort, or our encouragement, consider and treat them so, as if they were promulgated merely for us, and were only to be applied to the present event; and thereby taste and enjoy their sweetness and efficacy the more, and are warmed and cheared by livelier sentiments. — But are not the one sort as profitable and as necessary as the other? Can we ever represent to ourselves clearly and plainly what is true and good? can we ever prove it with reflection and sentiment? can we ever think on God and his presence with a quiet mind,

mind, or feel it more intimately, without being the better, the more tranquil, and the more happy for it? or does pleasure cease to deserve that name because it does not produce transports in us? Is serenity and peace not a pleasant and desirable state, because it does not break out in the raptures of joy?—And if our exercises of devotion are at times unfruitful, and neither our mind nor our heart are strongly and extraordinarily interested in them, will they not still always be good and profitable, to us, for the renewal of certain important, salutary representations, principles, and conclusions, and for rendering us thereby less unmindful of them?

This will happen to you at times, however sincerely you may wish to glow with the ardours of devotion, to enjoy the sublimest pleasures of it; how much soever you may have actually enjoyed them at other times. Then torment not yourselves

at this casual want of it; think it not a criminal hardness of your heart; let it not render you dismayed or dejected. The very disquietude it causes you, the uneasiness you discover about it, are evident testimonies that this kind of unfeelingness, or of less acute sensibility, is no consequence of your faulty behaviour, but the effect of outward accidental causes, or of the infirmity and limited powers of human nature. Therefore, expect not of devotion more than it promises. It promises you advantage, pleasure, and joy; but not always the most evident advantage, the most fertile enjoyment; not always the most lively pleasure; not always a transporting joy. As various as the natural dispositions, capacities, and abilities, the constitution and temper, and the outward circumstances of the pious are; so different likewise are, not the essentials of piety, but the force and degree of its effects upon them.

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This leads me to a fourth consideration, which is neither less true nor of less importance. It is this : variation, relaxation, and freedom, contribute much to the advancement of devotion. We must not slavishly bind ourselves to any prescriptions ; be scrupulous followers of any pattern ; burden ourselves with any unnecessary injunctions ; not require that the thoughts and sentiments should follow each other in a certain predetermined order, not with a fixed solicitude, or with a mistaken conscientiousness, determine to undertake and to do first this, and next that part of devotion, and not depart from it till we have reached our aim, and compleated our design, or are forced to leave off by languor and fatigue. No, every human intellect has its own course, its own train of thought; no other human intellect can serve it altogether for director and guide. And even the course our spirit pursues of its own election, is not always the same. At one

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time it is more disposed to one way, and then to another, of employing its powers: now more inclined to reflection and investigation, then more to contemplation and sentiment—now some religious doctrines, views, dispositions, or hopes, are of most importance, and then others: at one time it can more readily embrace a number of objects at once, than at another; at one time can take a loftier flight above visible things than it can at another.

The pious man has a wide field before him, no less delightful than fertile. In which are a hundred pleasurable paths that invite his steps, of unnumbered beauties, that he may contemplate, of various fruits that he may enjoy. He cannot pursue, enjoy, or profit by them all at once, nor all indiscriminately at every time. One while his eye surveys one beautiful prospect, and then another: now the enjoyment of one sort of pleasant fruit refreshes and strengthens

him, at another time another. The pious man betakes himself to retirement. Here he may prefer various exercises of religion. He can employ himself in reading, or in meditation, or in both of them at once: he can dwell more on his past conduct than on his present condition. He can yield more to his astonishment at the divine majesty, or to sentiments of the goodness and bounties of his God; indulge himself more in adoration and praise, or in thanksgiving; more in laying open his own wishes and views with filial freedom, or employ himself in affectionate petitions for his brethren: can exalt himself more in spirit to the invisible God, or hold converse with his Son and messenger to the human race, Jesus, our Lord and King: can dispose himself more to exercises of repentance, or faith, or love. The pious man cannot perform them all at once. To do them all in succession, in a certain appointed series, is a sort of violence that is at variance both with

with the nature of man and the nature of devotion. He therefore does that to which his heart, or the sentiment of any particular want, or a particular occasion, induces and impels him; he likewise quickly passes from one to another; by no means endeavour to force any sentiment; but rather gives free scope to his honest aspirations and thoughts; and at all times enjoys that pleasure which solicits him, and in the plan which it prescribes; and thus the pleasure of devotion ever retains its value, receives new charms, multiplies to infinity, and never allows enjoyment to turn into disgust.

Let such of you as are desirous of experiencing this, observe the rules I have now delivered. Learn to form just and worthy representations of God, and your behaviour towards him; learn to know and to revere him as love itself; render these reflections familiar to you; let them continually

tinually be present with you; bind them constantly closer and closer with whatever you see and hear, whatever you think and do, whatever you suffer and enjoy.—Aspire not always to the supreme degree of spiritual pleasure, and of pious joy; afflict not yourselves at the imperfection, the weakness and limitation of your faculties, which you have in common with all mankind, even the best of men; lay no unnecessary restraint upon yourselves; introduce a greater variety into your exercises of devotion; and avail yourselves therein of every kind of christian freedom; so will devotion most certainly be to you what it is to all its adherents and friends; the noblest application of our higher faculties; the firmest ground of serenity of mind and a virtuous conduct; the strength and nourishment of our spirit; the joy of our solitary hours, and our comfort in all our sorrows; the immediate

and most delightful means of communing with God, and with his son Jesus; the nearest way, the best preparative, for high perfection; the sweetest foretaste of better and happier life hereafter! This is the true christian devotion; and, if once you possess it, it will be constantly becoming, from day to day, more complete.

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